INSIDE: LIVIN' LARGE AT THE BIG SHOW'S HOUSE

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERAT

Raw magazi

POWER OF TOWER
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Ron Simmons is a Force In and Out of the Ring

IT'S NO WORK
The Real-Life History of The Mean Street Posse

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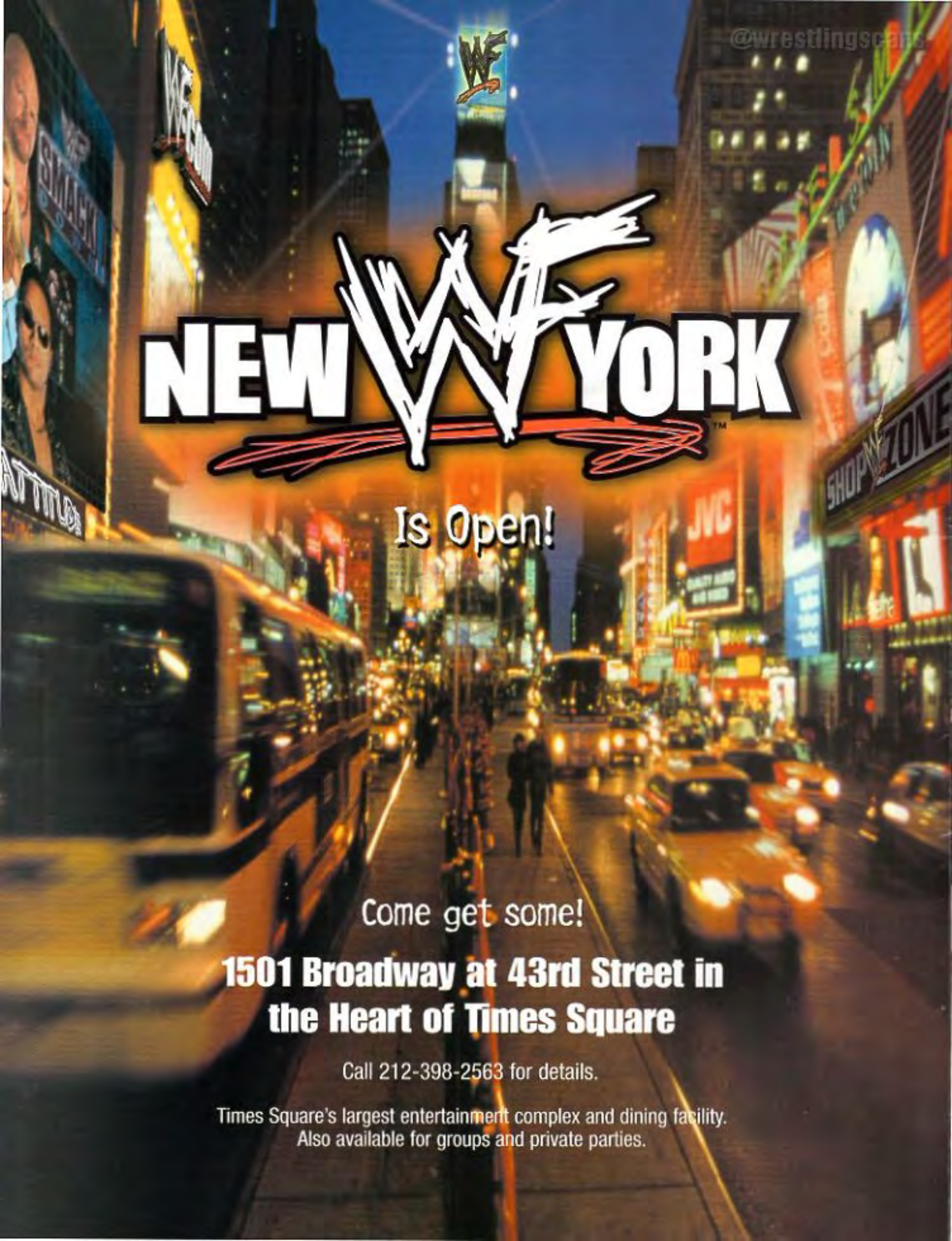
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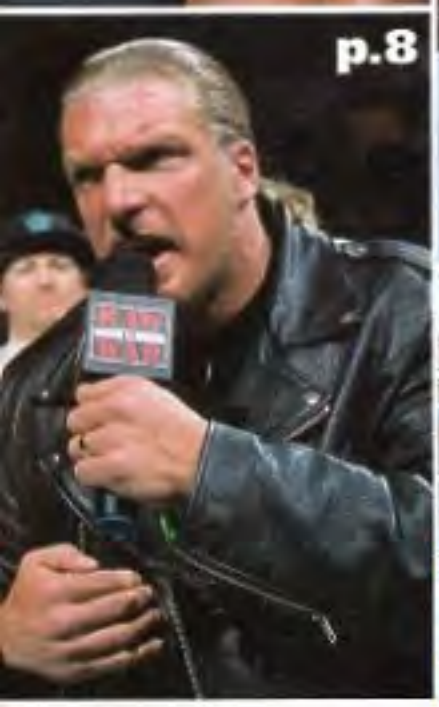

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Chyna Holds Nothing Back As She Tells Her Story

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RAGIN' Ross

Opinions and random thoughts from under the black hat...

By Jim Ross

Have you checked out ***Man on the Moon?*** Hope you will give it a shot, because I think you'll enjoy the wrestling content of the film. As a youngster, **Andy Kaufman** was a huge fan and originally wanted to perform in the World Wrestling Federation, long before landing in Memphis and his now famous feud with **Jerry Lawler.** "The King" did a great job playing himself, and even though the movie took some artistic liberty with elements of the true story, the finished product is very entertaining. I had a lot of fun providing the commentary for the wrestling scenes in the Milos Forman film starring **Jim Carrey.**

Stone Cold Steve Austin still has the eye of a tiger (or Rattlesnake) and will soon begin battling his next opponent: physical therapy and rehabilitation after his spinal surgery. Few in this business have ever had Austin's pride and work ethic. Those qualities make me believe that if anyone can rebound from this condition and surgery, it's Stone Cold Steve Austin.

Remember this: When **Mick Foley** becomes **Cactus Jack,** he becomes a very different person. Same body, but an extremely different and aggressive mind set.

The **Big Show** has dropped close to 100 pounds since signing with the Federation. The Show's best real weight will be between 375–400 pounds, from where I sit.

You have to be pleasantly surprised at how popular **Rikishi Phatu** is becoming; I know I am. Perhaps this veteran has finally found his niche.

What could **Tori** be up to? She sure seems to be undergoing changes in her personality. For **Kane**'s sake, I hope she's sincere.

How do you think **Matt Hardy** feels when he hears that his brother **Jeff** may be the next **Shawn Michaels?** What's Matt, chopped liver?

When **Tazz** officially debuts, do you think he will be a fan favorite? I do, initially. The former Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW) cornerstone is 240-or-so pounds on less than a six-foot frame which some think will hamper the young man; I don't.

Who's the most physical tag team in the World Wrestling Federation? For my money, it's the **Acolytes.** However, the best team I've seen in the Federation is still the **Outlaws.**

Edge looks to be a "can't miss" singles competitor, so why is he usually in tag matches? Could it be his loyalty to his brother **Christian,** or is it merely coincidence?

If **Al Snow** can refrain from becoming too silly, this veteran could find himself in significant main events this year.

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Mosh and **Thrasher** will do better not being fan favorites at this point in their careers. This duo could get red-hot very quickly. Keep an eye on the **Headbangers** in 2000.

Where exactly are the **"Mean Streets"** of Greenwich, CT?

Believe it or not, **J.R.'s BBQ Sauce** is about to be produced and distributed. We will keep you informed, but it's really going to happen!

With several **promising prospects** currently being trained by the World Wrestling Federation, look for 2000 to be a banner year for new faces to debut.

Thanks and take care! See you next month...
J.R. ■

At 275 pounds, **Mideon** is the same weight as when he graduated high school, and he seems to be much more serious about his career than ever before. The youngster from Tampa has lost over 35 pounds.

Injuries and weight issues continue to plague former-Olympian **Mark Henry.** I hope this is the year the youngster from Silsby, Texas, finally puts it all together because he certainly has the God-given ability to be a huge player in this business.

Mark this down: **Prince Albert** (*I still dislike the too gimmicky name*) will grow into a main event player in 2000. The Pittsburgh graduate is 6'7", 330 pounds and athletic.

Kurt Angle has the ability to be one of the all-time greats in the World Wrestling Federation. But I assure you, it has not been without a helluva lot of hard work. Remember...the three I's.

Chris Jericho is beginning to hit his stride and seems well on his way to becoming the Superstar everyone predicted when "Y2J" signed with the World Wrestling Federation. Winnipeg's contribution to the Federation is blessed with plenty of character and athleticism. 2000 will be a huge year for Jericho.

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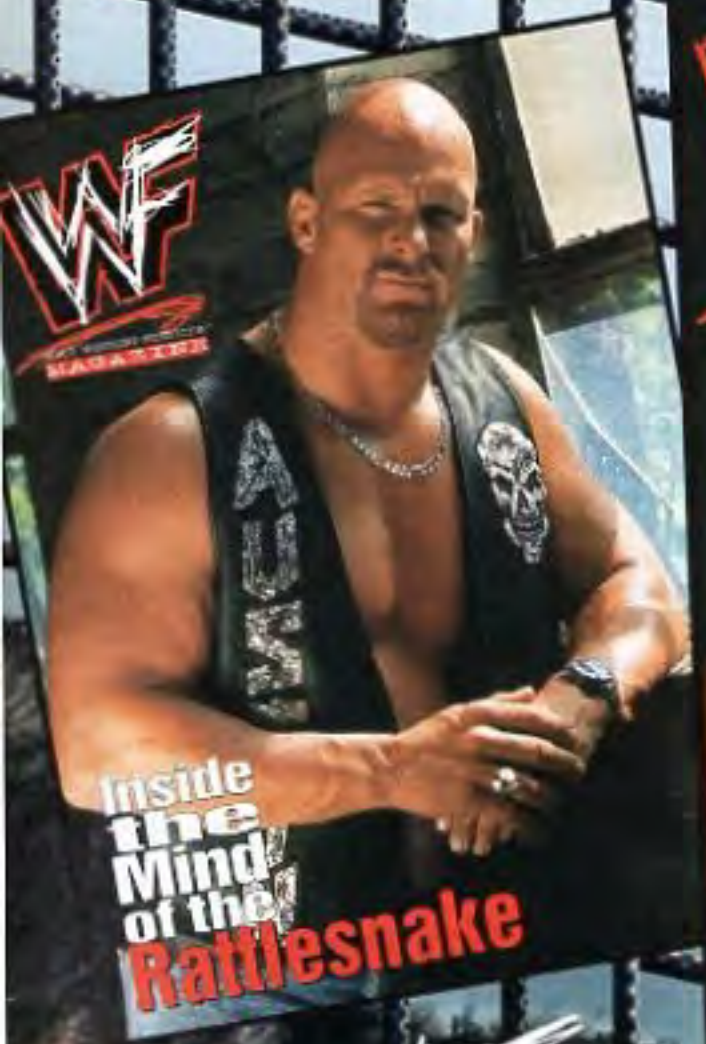

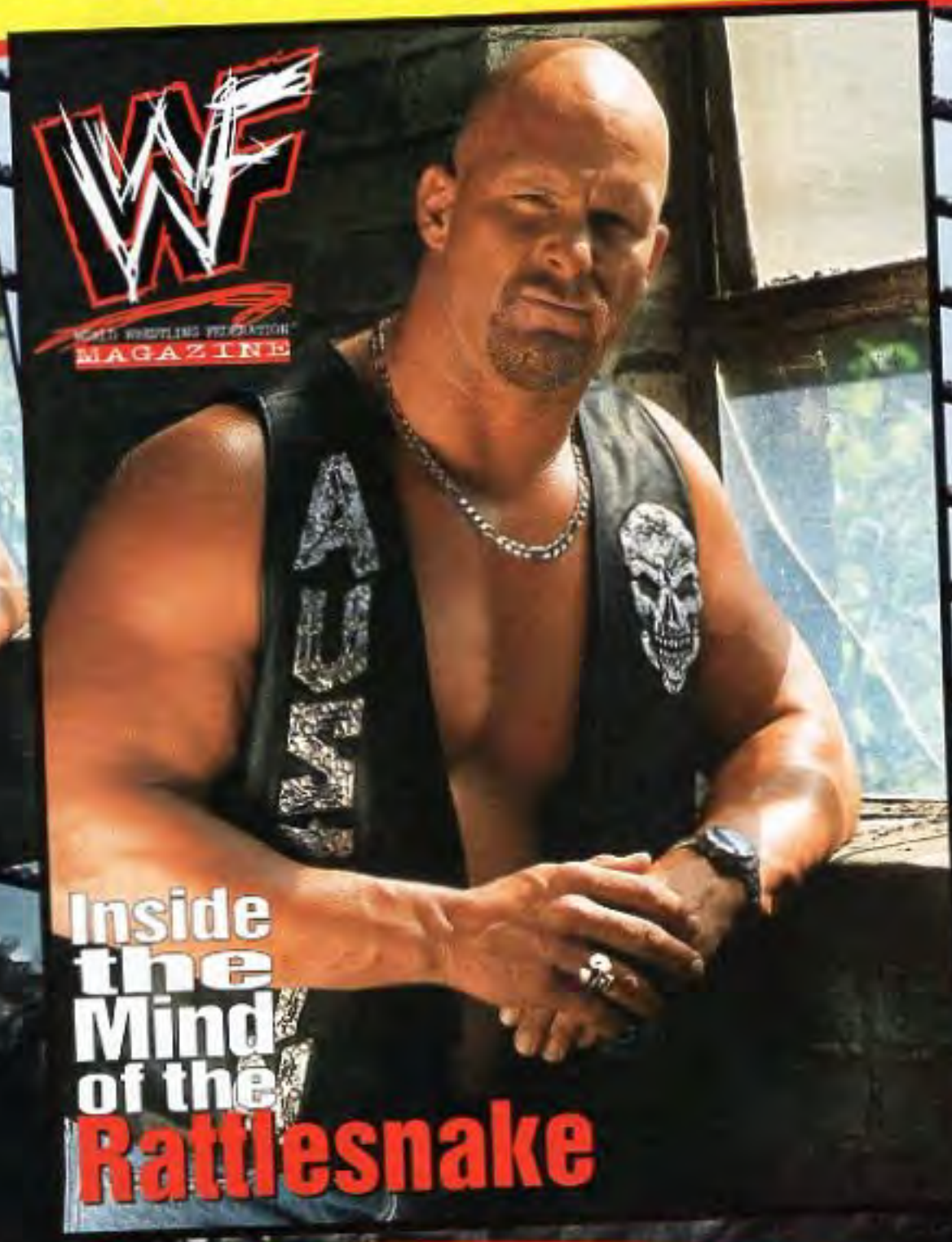

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fan mail

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The Ladies Want Equal Time

Dear Editor,

I'm writing on behalf of chicks everywhere, who I think are getting the shaft each month from *World Wrestling Federation* and *RAW Magazines*. Although I think that the Federation women are awesome, beautiful and very talented, especially Chyna, I think I can speak for the female World Wrestling Federation fans when I say: **"We want more Federation male Superstar photo shoots!"** Every month, it's either the "Puppies," Kitty, or another female star getting centerfolds, etc. The last male [centerfold] I can remember seeing was Shawn Michaels, which was an incredible picture, but that was so long ago. I hope you realize that there are tons of female Federation fans who would love to have a pin-up of the male Superstars! My own personal request is a long, sexy photo shoot of my boy, Triple H. Thanking you in advance for us chicks!

Jade Michaels
Via E-mail

The Tori Underground

Dear Editor,

I am just writing to say a BIG THANK YOU for those wonderful pictures of Tori "Ridin' The Rails" in the December *RAW Magazine*. Keep putting pictures like that in the magazine, and I guarantee your profits will double!

Josh Andrews
Via E-mail

From Hero to Heel

Dear Editor,

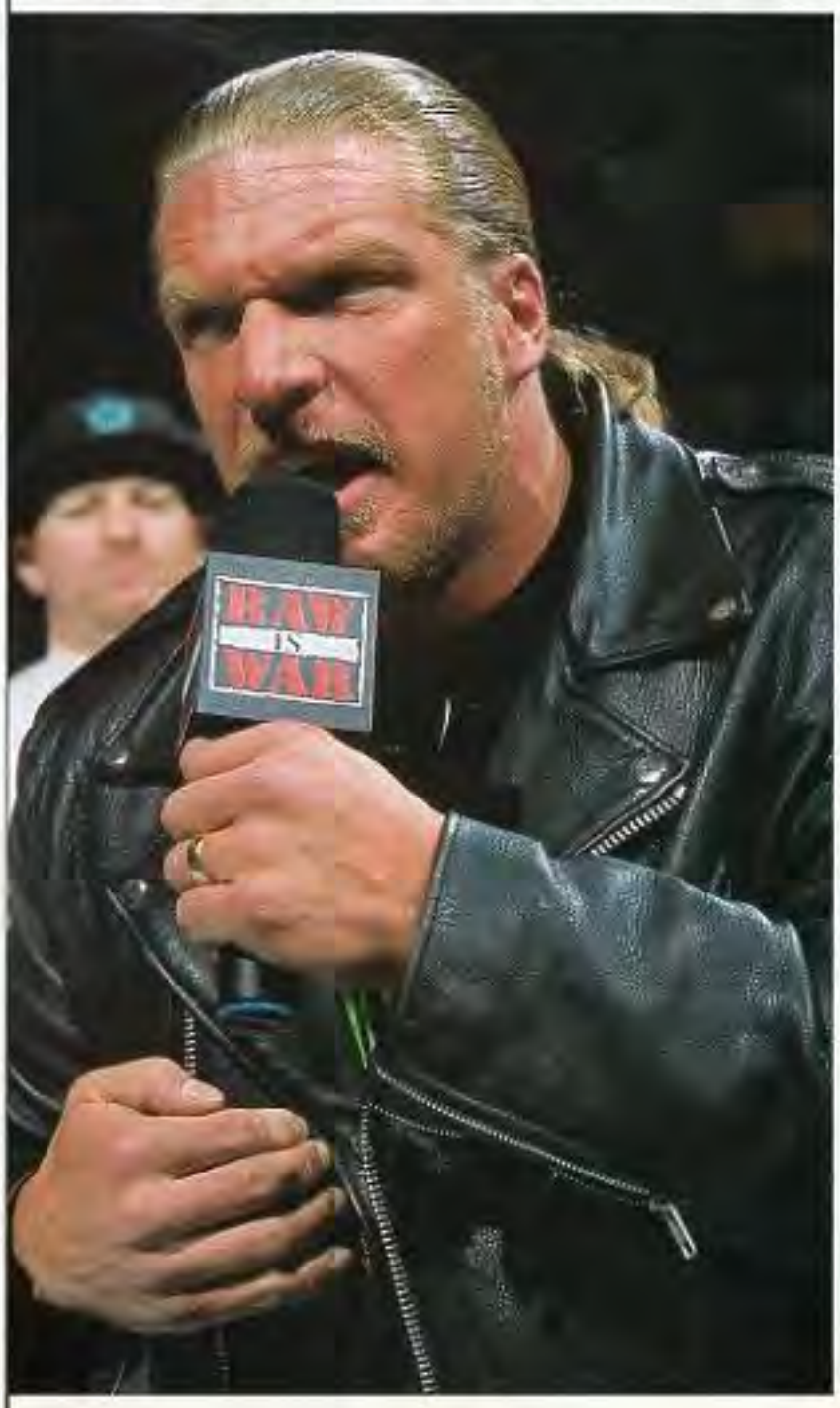
Thank you for your article about Triple H in the December issue of *RAW Magazine* ("The Game"). He's evolved from Hunter Hearst-Helmsley, one of the most loved Superstars from D-Generation X, into Triple H, the most hated man in all of wrestling today. Triple H made the sacrifice to lose money and popularity by turning heel for the sake of entertaining the fans, and he sure has done a great job in making us hate him. He is still an amazing wrestler, and even though he makes us call him that ever so famous bad word, he makes us show our real emotions. Also, he has brought about a new sense of evil to the World Wrestling Federation, and because of that, he has been one of the best Federation champions there ever was. I hope he will continue to grow as a wrestler and a character.

Jenn
Via E-mail

For Love of the Game

Dear Editor,

First of all, let me start by saying that I am not just a Triple H fan, I am a Triple H fanatic. I recently read "The Game" in the December issue of *RAW Magazine*. It was very enlightening to know what he has gone through to be a heel. Triple H is not only a fabulous wrestler, he is also



a great entertainer. The wedding with him and Stephanie McMahon was the funniest thing I've seen in the World Wrestling Federation. His match with Vince McMahon at *Armageddon* was the best I've seen in a long time, even better than Stone Cold's matches with Vince. Stone Cold is great and all, but Triple H is the greatest—he is "The Game"!

Jamie Abernathy
Hot Springs, AR

The Ladder of Success

Dear Editor,
Congratulations again, *RAW Magazine*. You have once again put together a great piece. I just finished reading the January 2000 edition. I loved the whole magazine, but I have to compliment you on your story about the "Greatest Ladder Match in World Wrestling Federation History" between the Hardy Boyz and Edge and Christian. This was a spectacular piece, and it was definitely a great description about the match and how the Superstars really feel about this match. I only hope people will remember more than just this match in these Superstars careers, and it does not turn into another Mick Foley "Hell in a Cell"-type of thing.

Will Williams
Via E-mail

We Stand Corrected

Dear Editor,
I loved the article on what Edge and Christian and the Hardy Boyz felt during the greatest ladder match of all time (*RAW Magazine*, January). I would like to clarify that Christian and the Hardy Boyz all held titles before the match. Christian was Light Heavyweight Champion and the Hardy Boyz were Tag Team Champions. You said Christian and the Hardy Boyz had yet to hold a title. Please clarify and keep the great articles coming.

Mark Puczek
Norridge, IL

Dazzled by Tazz

Dear Editor,
I just got done with the January 2000 issue of *RAW Magazine*, and let me tell you that I thoroughly enjoyed it, especially the article on Tazz. I've been a huge Tazz fan since his ECW days. I know he'll live up to all the fans' expectations; he'll be a great asset to the company as well. I also immensely enjoyed the pictorial on Miss Kitty. MEOW! It's refreshing to see a woman with natural beauty. How about a whole swimsuit issue with all the World Wrestling Federation women? Also, why not do exposés on them as well?

Lesley Reddin
Somerville, MA

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Party With the Governor

Connecticut's Rowland Treats His Son to a Special Birthday Tour of Titan Tower

Connecticut Gov. John Rowland made his son R.J.'s 13th birthday an unforgettable one when he arranged a trip to the World Wrestling Federation's headquarters for R.J. and his friends. The group met with Chairman Vince McMahon, Tazz and the Mean Street Posse, and were given a tour of the offices, gym and TV studio. Dr. Tom Prichard showed the group a few moves during his in-ring demonstration. Below, Prichard gives the group a lecture on ring safety.

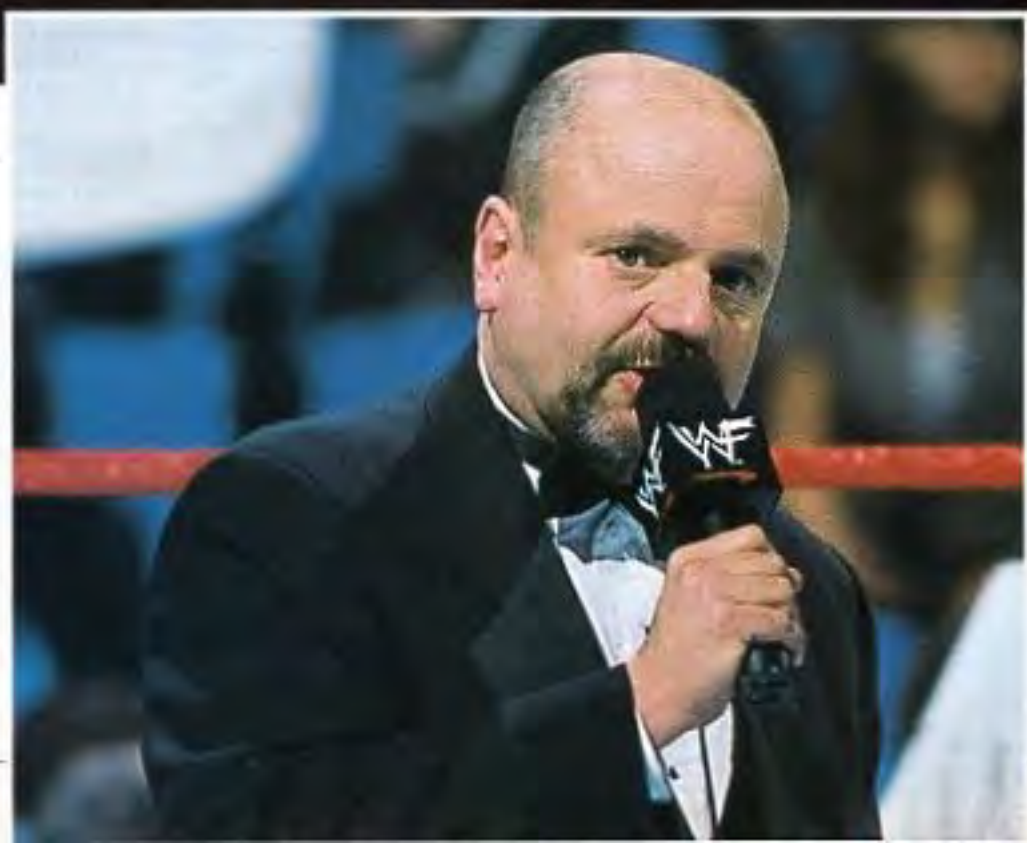
in the raw

Can't Sink The Fink

Howard Power!

The Real Federation Iron Man

Did you know that Howard Finkel is the only person to be a performer at every *WrestleMania*? The Fink is supposedly really looking forward to continuing that streak on April 2 in Anaheim at the biggest *WrestleMania* ever!



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Saluting Worcester's Bravest

World Wrestling Federation Superstars Pay Their Respects to Fallen Firemen with Visit and Donation

The entire nation mourned the loss of six Worcester, Mass., firefighters who died battling a warehouse blaze in December. When the World Wrestling Federation pulled into town for *RAW Is War* on Dec. 6, a group of Superstars visited the firehouse to pay their respects to the fallen heroes. The Big Boss Man, Prince Albert, D'Lo Brown, Gangrel* and Scottie Too Hotty from Too Cool made the trip, along with the Federation's Tony Garea and Kevin Kelly. In addition to visiting the firefighters, the Superstars also made a $10,000 donation on behalf of the World Wrestling Federation to a fund assisting the families of the six firefighters who lost their lives.

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an insider's view outside the ring...

Football Fever

Patriot Games

It Doesn't Matter What Your Record Is!

Add the New England Patriots to the list of the "millions and millions" of The Rock's fans. Members of the NFL team got to go one-on-one with the "Great One" and Mick Foley at a World Wrestling Federation show in Worcester, Mass. Even this brush with greatness wasn't enough to get the Pats into the NFL playoffs, however.

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Know Your Many Roles: Rock helped out the Big Show...

took a minute to greet reggae star Ziggy Marley...

and signed books for the "millions and millions" of his fans in New York.

Big Show Smells It

The Rock Cooks Up Advice For a Superstar in Need

The Big Show was one of the biggest additions to the Federation's roster in 1999. Show was the World Wrestling Federation Champion as the year drew to a close, and his best days are still ahead of him, despite his lofty perch at the end of the year. However, ask anyone involved behind the scenes and they will tell you (off the record, of course) that he struggled through the final year of the millennium. Despite some difficulty, the Big Show has made a turn-around—thanks to listening to someone who has been there.

Following a disappointing match against the Big Boss Man at December's *Armageddon* Pay-Per-View, the Big Show was at his wits' end. Both men had worked exceptionally hard, but the live audience was unresponsive. A number of factors could have played into that less-than-positive response, such as placement on the card. But nonetheless, Show took it personally. According to a variety of sources, Show's frustration boiled over in the locker room.

Those same sources report that The Rock pulled Big Show aside following that tirade and reminded him of his responsibility as champion. One source requesting anonymity said, "[The] Rock just told him the way it is. Show aired his frustration and was grateful and appreciative for the advice." That night's audience with the "Great One" really seemed to help the big man, as the Big Show was on fire at the close of the year. You have to wonder what that meeting with The Rock did for the Big Show's confidence and desire. For more on The Rock and the Big Show, pick up a copy of the April edition of *World Wrestling Federation Magazine*. Did The Rock's experience as "Rocky Maivia" show the Big Show the way to go?

It promises to be a very successful year for the Big Show. While he certainly would have figured it out on his own, hearing those words from The Rock may help propel the Show to even greater heights.

Paul Had a Ball

Bearing Up To an Idol

Country Legend Jones Makes Paul Bearer's Day

Paul Bearer recently found a reason to put aside his funeral parlor doom and gloom. The veteran manager had the honor of meeting his all-time idol, country music legend George Jones. No word on whether the Nashville superstar agreed to cut a duet with the distinctly voiced Mr. Bearer. Paul also used his time away from the road to shed 59 pounds and 11 full inches from his waist! A no-carb diet was the key to Paul's success in dropping the excess poundage.

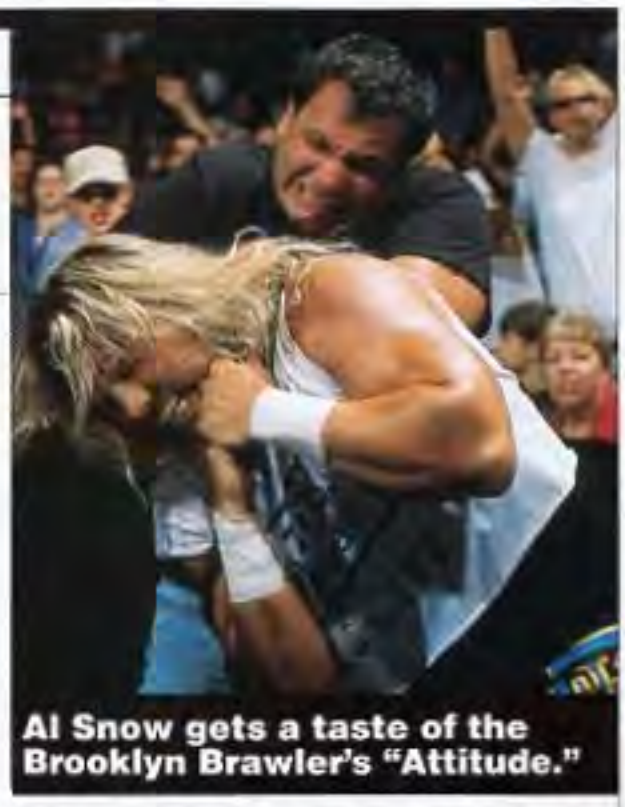
Behind the Curtain

Road-Related Rumors

The Informer Steps Boldly into the Back and Delivers the Dirt

We've Been Waiting 2,000 Years Luna has been more "loony" lately. Gangrel's Gal has been crowing about the coming of a "Chosen One," and that his arrival would make "The Trilogy Complete." Who she is talking about, and what it means for the Federation is still a secret.

He's Gonna Moider da Bums! It seems that one of the most memorable characters in the Federation's history may be on the comeback trail. When the Brooklyn Brawler recently donned a ripped New York Yankees T-shirt, he received a great reception from the crowd. Could the creative team find a spot for a man who is dripping with "Attitude"?



Al Snow gets a taste of the Brooklyn Brawler's "Attitude."

Touchdown! The Federation's role in the Super Bowl was again praised for its creativity. Did you know that the original concept for the commercial was changed to what eventually was shot in early January? Guess it really is tough to get "respect!"

Come Fly with Me According to our sources in the Travel Department: The Superstars who log the most air miles are: 1) Tori; 2) Ivory; and 3) The Godfather. All three live on the West Coast, and love their native surroundings.

Some Traditions Never Change Congratulations to Christian on his recent engagement! The young Superstar was planning on a romantic New Year's Eve proposal but just couldn't wait. A day early but no less romantic, the question was popped and the answer was "Yes!"

Two Many Choices While The Rock received most of the "Best of 1999" awards, who would you vote for the Tag Team of 1999? Outlaws? Acolytes? Edge and Christian? Many would say Matt and Jeff Hardy.

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By Keith Elliot Greenberg

A TRIUMPH STRAIGHT OUT OF THE BLUE

The Blue Meanie's Childhood Battle With Asthma

For hours, the chubby, unhealthy boy stood in front of the television, slowly switching channels and adjusting the antenna, hoping to catch the snowy image of a wrestling match being broadcast on some out-of-town station. In a life filled with physical discomfort and the taunts from other children, the mat wars were a welcome escape, a retreat into a make-believe world populated by chiseled gladiators like Rocky Johnson and Tony Atlas, crazed brawlers like the Wild Samoans, and squeaky-clean heroes like Tony Garea and Bob Backlund.

During happier moments, Brian Heffron—known to fans today as the Blue Meanie—accompanied his grandfather to the matches, and did "wrestler interviews" in front of a home video camera. At night, the youngster pictured himself stepping through the curtain, coming down the aisle, and being introduced by ring announcer Howard Finkel to a ravenous audience.

"It was a fantasy," the 26-year-old Heffron recounts. "But deep in my heart, I had my doubts."

That's because just getting through the day was often a challenge for Heffron. As long as he could remember, Brian had trouble breathing—particularly during the fall, when the air was filled with pollen. Heffron's asthma was so bad that he was barely in school, forcing teachers to leave him back in both kindergarten and the third grade.

Life began for Heffron in Philadelphia, the city where he'd later get his first taste of wrestling renown as a performer in Extreme Championship Wrestling (ECW). He was raised by his mother, Leona, a cashier, and grandparents, Jim and Ann Reardon; he never knew his father. At age two, the family relocated to Gloucester City, New Jersey, then—eight years later—Atlantic City.

Money was tight—Brian is the first member of his family to own a car—but there were also a lot of laughs. His grandfather found a job as a security guard at Trump Plaza, and took Brian to the fan banquet before *WrestleMania IV*. Brian circulated through the crowd, and worked up the courage to approach some of the wrestlers. He came away with autographs from Randy "Macho Man" Savage, Hillbilly Jim, and Bret "Hit Man" Hart.

The dreams of mat stardom re-surfaced. But, in the real world, Brian was a kid whose asthma had prevented him from playing sports. At school, the other kids would laugh when he'd stop on the stairs to catch his breath. "There were many nights when my family would run into my room because my lungs would be so congested that I couldn't breathe," he says. "I'd be drenched in sweat, and—no pun intended—my skin would be blue." Without a family auto, they'd have to call a cab, then wait for the vehicle to arrive at their home and bring the boy to the hospital where he'd be given an injection to shock his lungs.

Once, he spent an entire month in Atlantic City Medical Center, with an IV in his arm, and an oxygen tent pitched over his bed. Every week, Jim Reardon would pick up his grandson at St. Michael's school, and bring him to the doctor for an injection. Then, when Brian was 12, his family heard about Dr. Hugo Altimarino, a specialist two towns over in Margate. Jim loaded the boy onto a bus, and off they went on a journey that would change Brian's life.

"He gave me a compressor filled with medicine," Heffron says. "Air would shoot through a plastic hose, turn the medicine into mist, and send it into my lungs. I'd use the compressor in the morning. Then, during recess, while the other kids were playing kickball in the yard, I'd sit in the cafeteria with my grandfather and my breathing machine. I remember some of the kids walking by and looking at us, like I was a freak."

But the worst years were ending. Brian was prescribed medication and given an inhaler, to supplement the effects of the breathing device. By the time he entered Atlantic City High School, his lungs had gotten stronger, and he began to think that, just maybe, life as a professional wrestler was something more than a pipe dream.

One by one, he eliminated the breathing machine, the medication and the inhaler. He was buying every wrestling publication he could find, and practicing some of the moves he saw athletes like Mr. Perfect, "Million Dollar Man" Ted DiBiase and Demolition display in the World Wrestling Federation. In the National Wrestling Alliance (NWA), Keiji Muto—also known as the Great Muta—had seized Brian's attention. Soon, the teenager was

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imitating the Japanese star, perching himself on the corner of a swimming pool, as if he were standing on a turnbuckle, and moonsaulting into the water. Remembering his old idol, Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka, Brian also splashed into the pool with a near-flawless "Superfly Leap," separating his fingers the way the high-flying Fijian did when he wished to give his fans the "I Love You" sign.

Having defeated asthma, Brian would now trample his opponents in the ring—as well as trampling the doubts of those who said he wasn't hearty enough for the mat wars. After investigating several training schools, and saving money by working as a security guard after graduation, Heffron moved to Lima, Ohio to learn the game from Al Snow.

It was a tough mission for a kid who'd never played a period of basketball or a quarter of football. "I remember walking up five flights of stairs to Snow's gym, then running the ropes over and over," Brian says. "When I was done, my back and my ass were purple. But, I was still breathing."

Despite his goofy persona in the ring, Snow was a "strong leader," according to Heffron. "He let me take baby steps, doing a headstand, then falling onto my back while tucking in my chin, or using my hands as I fell to the mat before I did it with no hands. I learned amateur wrestling—holds and counter holds. The point was getting me comfortable with doing the kinds of things wrestlers do in the course of a match. And I began to feel that this was a place where I really belonged."

In June, 1994—three months after he started training—Heffron had his first match in a small town in Ontario. There were only 30 people in the audience, but he was still thrilled. "I sent a tape home to show my family that I wasn't crazy," Brian remembers. "I could do it."

In less than six months, he was in ECW, where Scott Levy—known as Johnny Polo and Raven, among other ring names—turned Heffron into the Blue Meanie, a bizarre, mohawked figure resembling a group of villainous characters from the Beatles' animated film, *Yellow Submarine*. While hardly a main eventer, the Meanie developed a cult following and, in late 1998, entered the World Wrestling Federation.

"Sometimes, I still can't believe I'm in the same arena—and the same ring—where Jimmy Snuka, Don Muraco and Rocky Johnson wrestled," he says. "And I think about some other kid with asthma, watching me at home because he's sick of getting teased and he wants to get away from reality. Well, the reality is that I've been through it too, and it's okay to daydream. That's what I did, and I made it." ■

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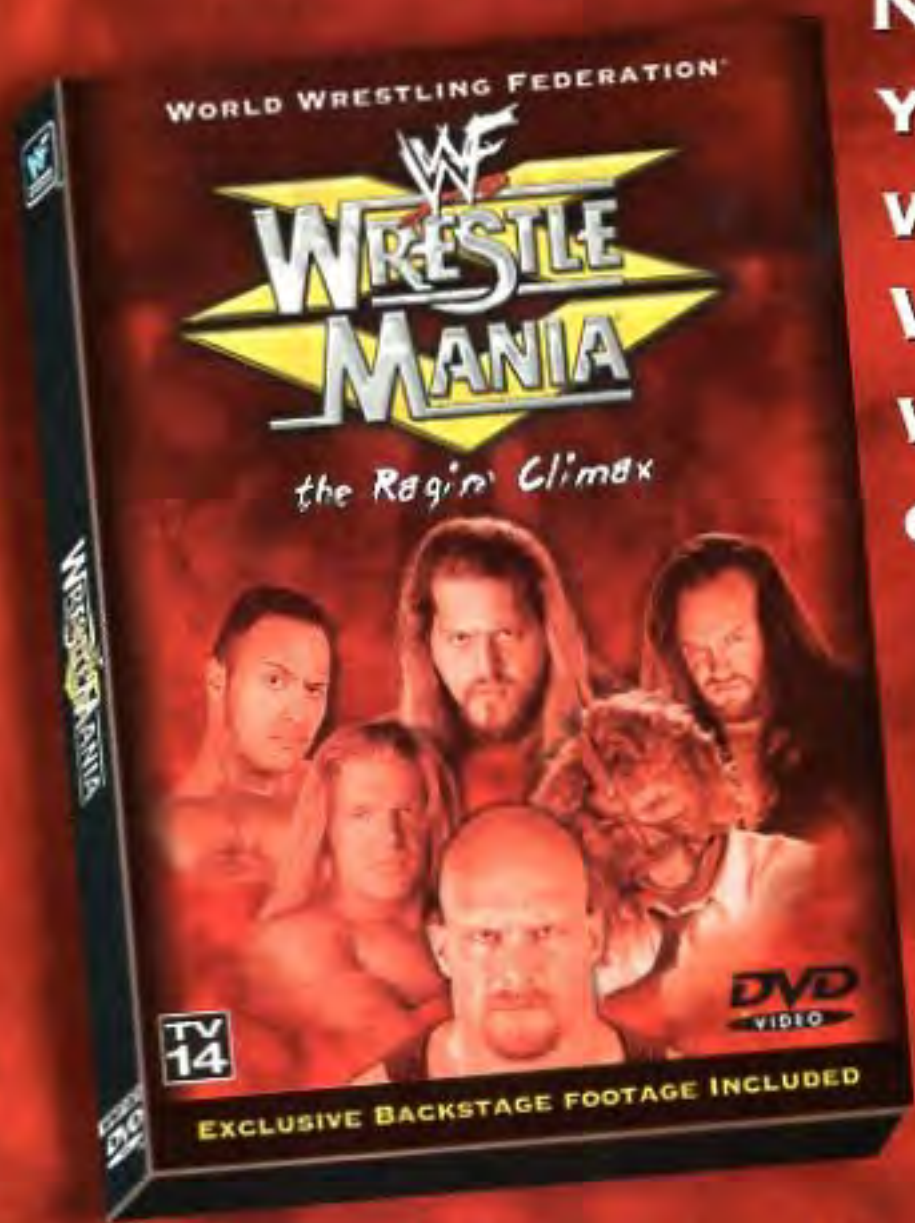

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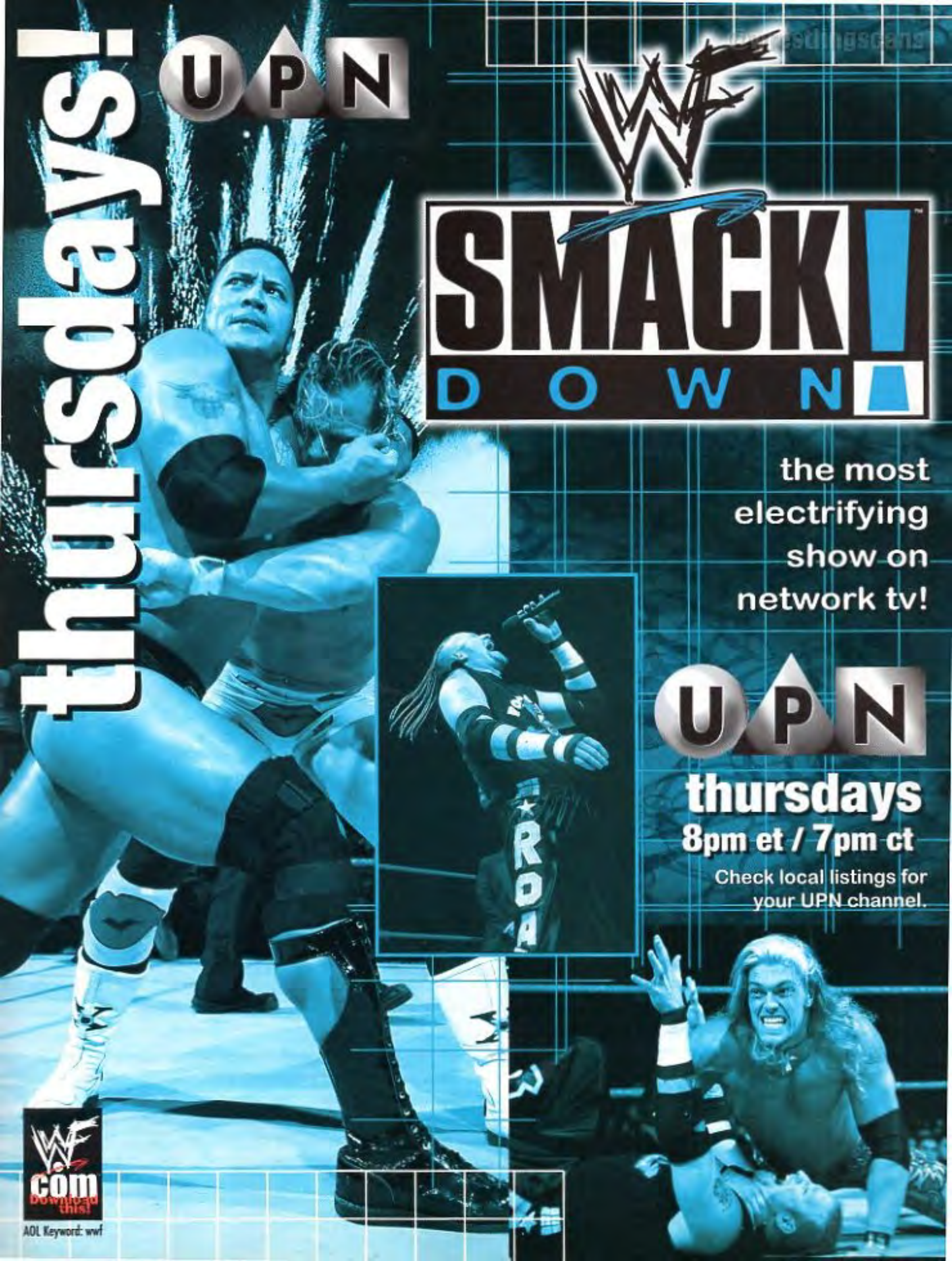
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Interview conducted **by dennis a. brent**

Towering Presence

Whether appearing before the cameras, running a multi-faceted corporation, meeting with press or shareholders, or simply being a wife and mother, Linda McMahon has created her own success story within the World Wrestling Federation.

"Shane is a really talented performer, but he scares me to death! That Monday night on *RAW* when he dove off the top of the cage and flew halfway across the ring, I literally jumped to my feet and held my breath."

—Linda McMahon, Shane's mom

***RAW* Magazine:** *Linda, you've been married to Vince McMahon for 33 years and have always been involved in the management of the World Wrestling Federation, yet only recently have the fans seen you or heard from you. Could you explain your true role here at the World Wrestling Federation and what you do, versus what Vince does?*

Linda McMahon: Well, clearly Vince is the driving, creative, visionary force of the company. And that really is the engine of the company. His entrepreneurship creates the need for administration, management, strategic planning, and sharing of that vision to be able to execute it. So, my job as president and CEO of the company is to make sure everything is in place so we can create the product and go forward with it.

RAW: *Please bring our readers up to date on the exciting news the company has had lately.*

Linda: I guess the most outstanding event that has happened in the past few months was our IPO, the Initial Public Offering [of WWFE on NASDAQ].

That was a momentous occasion in the history of this company. We've always operated as a privately held company, and now we've taken our company to a billion-dollar valuation...an unbelievable milestone. For the first time, we are getting the kind of recognition that comes from being a public company.

Now, we continue to be recognized and understood by our fans who have made us successful, but in addition, we have the attention of a broader national and international business, investment, and media community as well. The fact that we're the top-rated, regularly scheduled show on cable and now the number one–rated show on UPN

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speaks of the popularity of the World Wrestling Federation brand and our particular form of entertainment.

RAW: *Were you always involved in the business, even when Shane and Stephanie were young children? Have you always been involved somehow behind the scenes?*

Linda: How it really began...I think it was 1972 when Vince first went on the air as an announcer for his father's company, Capitol Wrestling Corporation. Shane was two years old, and I was a paralegal at a law firm in Washington, D.C. Vince and I moved from Washington to New Britain, Connecticut that year, and Vince started travelling a lot more for Capitol. I wasn't working then; I was at home. But I was assisting Vince in a lot of different ways with some of the things he was doing.

In 1980, we formed Titan Sports. Vince was not only producing television, and helping expand the syndication for his father's company, but he also began to promote some events on his own, mostly in the New England area.

As I became more involved in helping him, I saw the need for setting up systems for handling different aspects of the business. I developed a lot of systems that are still in use today. So we really worked as a team.

On April 1, 1980 we hired our first employee and that was Howard Finkel; our second employee was Ed Cohen [now Senior Vice President of Event Booking], both are still with us.

Then in 1982, we bought his father's company, and wanted to expand from the Northeast across the country. I was getting more involved in licensing, mail order, product development, finance, and contracts, as well as writing and editing our

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publications.

We trademarked the name World Wrestling Federation in the mid-'80s. We were the first wrestling company to share revenues with the performers themselves for products which bore their likeness or name. All of these programs helped pave the way to where we are now.

RAW: *UPN has a promo for* SmackDown! *that refers to the McMahon family as "the most twisted family on American television." In reality the McMahons are a very closeknit, loving family. It's a wonderful thing and everybody works together. As their mom, how do you feel after seeing Shane and Stephanie blossom on television and in the business world?*

Linda: I'm unbelievably proud. Working in this company was not something we ever insisted on, or even encouraged Shane and Stephanie to do. They always knew they were welcome, and that we would love to have them, but they also knew that if they wanted to pursue a different career path, we would support their decision. So we are doubly pleased that this was something they WANTED to do. And now, Shane's wife, Marissa, has joined us. She is expanding the publicity envelope in a lot of different directions, like Stone Cold in the milk campaign, articles in *TALK Magazine, Vanity Fair,* and *Marie Claire,* to name a few.

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RAW: *What do you think about Shane's performance in the ring?*

Linda: Shane is a really talented performer, but he scares me to death! That Monday night on *RAW* when he dove off the top of the cage and flew halfway across the ring, I literally jumped to my feet and held my breath. The next week he did a back flip over the floor barricade onto the concrete and hit his head. It's really hard watching, knowing he's hurt, yet knowing he's going to continue. I get a phone call right afterwards saying, "Mom, I'm fine."

It's the same way when Vince is in the ring. I watch, but my heart is in my throat sometimes.

RAW: *As a mother, what do you think about the controversy we seem to be drawn into concerning parents monitoring, or not monitoring, what their children watch?*

Linda: It's an age-old controversy about the responsibility of movie producers, television networks, book publishers, writers, record labels, and now videogame makers, etc. to create content that is acceptable. Our society has a lot of different consumer appetites. We do create programming and products that appeal to many ages, just by virtue of some of the zaniness and sheer entertainment we do. But also, we focus our product to a particular demographic depending on broadcast time.

Our "edgier" shows are *RAW* and *The War Zone* from 9–11 p.m. on Monday evenings on the USA cable network, and are rated TV14. On Thursday,

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our 8–10 p.m. broadcast of *SmackDown!* on UPN is TVPG, as are our Saturday and Sunday morning programs and syndication. [These ratings are meant to be a guide for parents.] Our edgiest programming is reserved for our monthly PPV audience.

A parent gets a sense of what their children want to watch, and should guide them accordingly. I do think the ultimate responsibility rests with parents.

RAW: *You were involved in a storyline that brought you into the ring a few times. When you were in that ring, how did you feel when Chyna and Triple H were yelling in your face and threatening you on live national television?*

Linda: I was intimidated. They were frightening. I am much more nervous in the ring than I am in front of a press conference or in front of a big investment committee. It takes a great deal of talent and training to do what our Superstars and the rest of my family do week after week in the ring. They are on a stage performing and that is a true craft. I personally don't think I am very good at it, but I've enjoyed what I've done. It's an awesome experience to be able to directly interact with our fans, and I always welcome that opportunity.

RAW: *Your kids are so good at what they do, that they really set the bar up there for Mom when you joined them in the ring.*

Linda: Not just Shane and Stephanie, but all of our Superstars. They are all trained professionals, and the moves which they perform in and around the ring should not be tried by anyone watching our events unless that person is also a professional.

RAW: *What was your favorite or funniest moment from the last few years?*

Linda: Wow. We've done so many things I have enjoyed, but I have to tell you something we've done just recently that I am thoroughly enjoying, and that is featuring [the Fabulous] Moolah and Mae Young. I have such admiration for those two women. They come to the ring and perform physical moves like those of MUCH younger counterparts and take falls out of the ring! They are two real veterans for whom I have an incredible respect. They make me laugh, and they make me applaud because I think they are so good. I am thoroughly entertained by them, and in awe.

One of my least favorite moments from the past few years was the night that Stone Cold Steve Austin threw Vince from the top of the steel-cage door onto the announcers table during a PPV event, and I knew he was hurt. I was frightened by it, and it was just one of those moments that for a brief second you have that fear of how seriously he might be hurt.

RAW: *Have you ever thought about writing a book?*

Linda: Yes, I have thought about writing a book (laughs). I often thought it would have to be fiction, or would be considered fiction, because nobody would believe that many of the events in our lives actually happened. But, there are a lot of anecdotes and stories that would be fun to tell.

RAW: *What do the McMahons talk about over the dinner table?*

Linda: Now we're talking about our new son-in-law, Triple H, and Stephanie's shocking behavior. She appears to be consumed with power. As this magazine goes to press, I'm not quite sure what to make of her behavior. It is so antithetical to what I have always believed to be our daughter's character.

RAW: *Any final words?*

Linda: I just want to say that I enjoy being here at the World Wrestling Federation everyday, and I feel privileged to be part of this unique and entertaining form of American pop culture. Our company is always appreciative for the opportunity to entertain its fans around the world. ■

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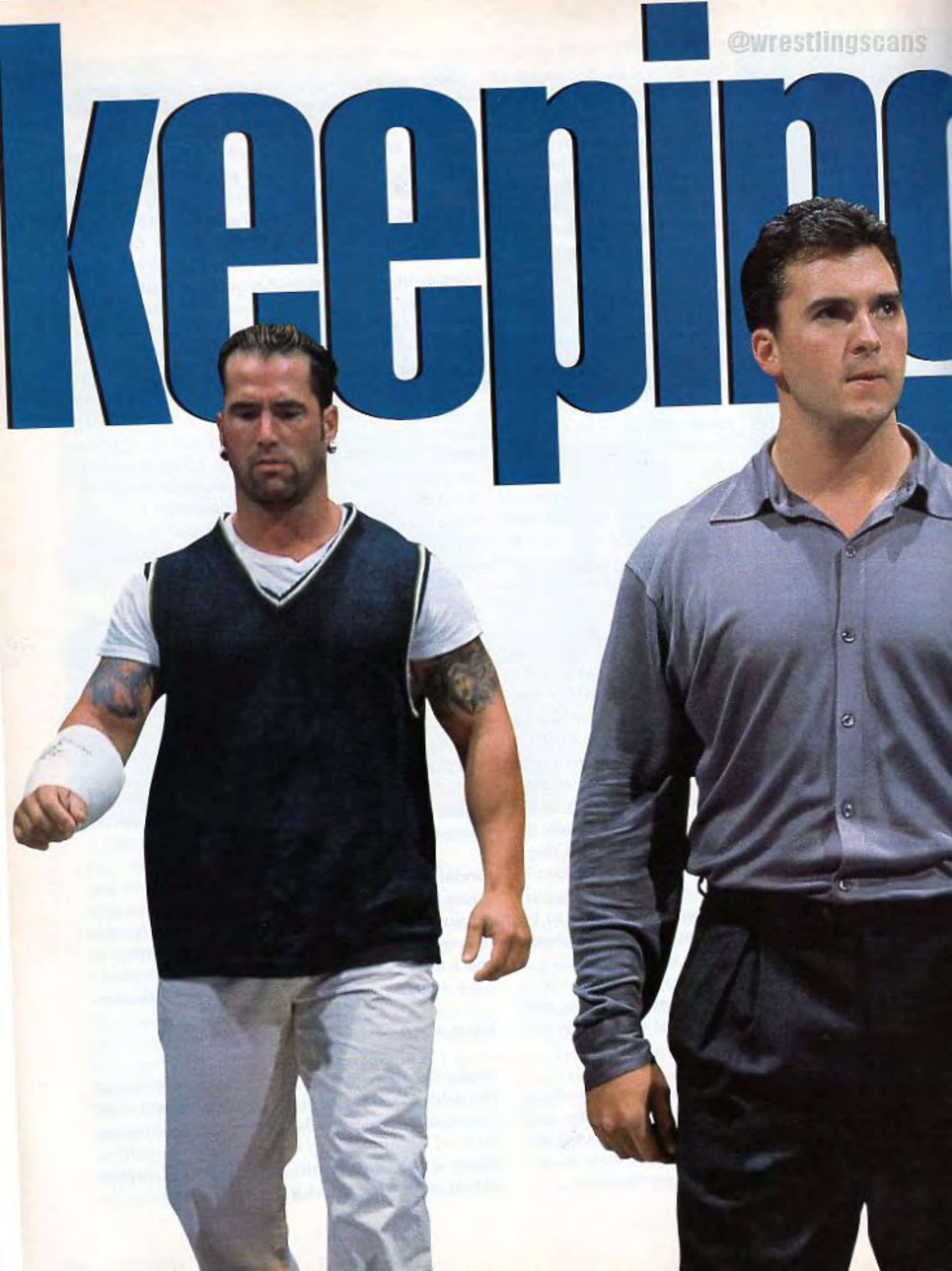

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u it real

It's Not All Just a Show for Pete Gas and Rodney

BY MIKE FAZIOLI

Wrestling fans get worked. It's part of the deal. Which is fine, by today's standards. Fans are perfectly willing to play along when they're told that the Undertaker and Kane are "long-lost brothers," or that Hardcore and Crash Holly are "cousins." Wink, wink, nudge, nudge. Part of the business.

So when Shane McMahon introduced his "Mean Street Posse" to the World Wrestling Federation, most fans winked, nudged and assumed it was a work. Old buddies from childhood? Actually...

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Pete Gas and Rodney have a long, legit history with Shane, dating back to middle school. They're really Pete and Rodney from Greenwich, Connecticut, and although the streets of fashionable Greenwich are anything but mean, they really are Shane's "posse."

"Actually, I couldn't stand Shane when we first met," Rodney says. "We didn't like each other at all. It almost came to blows one day. After that day, we became the best of friends. We were so much alike that, at first, we couldn't stand each other."

The original vignettes shot by Pete, Rodney and non-wrestling friend Willie Greene were designed to help Shane "get over" as the rich, snobby heel leading into his "Greenwich Street Fight" against X-Pac [*RAW Is War*, March 22, 1999].

"[Shane] wanted to use his real friends," Rodney recalls. "We got all dressed up in those preppy clothes and the whole nine yards. We made ourselves sickening and told stories about how we were the best at everything. It was really not supposed to go anywhere. They asked us to do one shoot, then another, then another, and the next thing you know we're at *WrestleMania* [*XV*] and then we're in the ring training."

"Those stories we told in the vignettes...those stories were true," Pete says. "I remember when I was in the office, [Shane] said, 'This is the script they want you to go by,' and he tore it up. He said, 'You and Rodney tell the stories.'"

The stories used in the original Posse vignettes were only a small taste of the real-life war stories Pete, Rodney and Shane amassed during their teen years. Some are printable—but most are probably best left alone.

"We always caused trouble, actually," Rodney says. "There are some pretty crazy stories. We just did whatever we wanted to do. Driving down the highway on top of cars, 80 miles an hour. Jumping over snowbanks. McMahon running things over with his truck. We just didn't think about the consequences until later on when we'd get in trouble. We weren't doing it maliciously, we just wanted to have fun."

Real friends, real stories, and a real bad wardrobe made the effect instantaneous. Right off the bat, Pete and Rodney were generating heel heat that some veteran wrestlers would kill for. The stuck-up, rich-punk personas were an instant success, and they didn't require a lot of research. Rodney and Pete found plenty of material along the way while growing up in Greenwich.

"We knew what we didn't like," Rodney says, "so when you take into consideration what people think of [Greenwich] in smaller towns and blue-collar towns where everyone's father is a construction worker or works in a steel mill or whatever, it's easy heat."

"No one likes those rich, snobby kids, especially the ones who think they're tough," Pete says. "They're tough when they're sliding in and beating someone who's already down, but then all of a sudden they become chicken&#*% when the heat comes on. So we always end up getting our asses kicked."

Characters in place, the task at hand was to then transform two "civilians"—Pete was working for a company that rented equipment to movie studios, and Rodney was working as a mechanic for a Greenwich car dealership—into bona fide ring workers. Enter World Wrestling Federation talent development manager Dr. Tom Prichard.

Prichard taught the basics to the boys, from bumps to ring psychology to the basic flow of a match. Other veteran Federation personnel—Michael Hayes, Ray Traylor, Gerald Brisco and Pat Patterson, among others—loaned their expertise.

"There aren't enough good things I can think of to say about Dr. Tom," Rodney says. "You sit there and listen to him and respect him because he's been there and because he's just a hell of a guy. He'll put his body on the line for us to learn to do something, instead of us possibly hurting each other or someone else. He takes the most bumps in the whole company."

"We owe Dr. Tom our right arms," Pete adds. "He's been the biggest help to us."

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(Left) Pete, Rodney and Shane (from left) pose with their dates prior to their senior prom in 1988.
(Right) Pete (75), Rodney (44), Shane (61) and teammates celebrate Greenwich High's 1988 Fairfield County (CT) high school football championship victory. Pete and Shane played on the offensive line for the Cardinals, while Rodney played fullback.

There's a long history of bumps the Posse can draw on when the storyline calls for them to mix it up with "former friend" Shane. The three played football for Greenwich High School, with Pete and Shane on the offensive line and Rodney at fullback. Years of rowdiness and physical games—including a particularly vicious swimming-pool game called "The Game of Pain," which involved point-blank poundings with kickballs and basketballs—made their in-ring brawls second-nature.

"I remember one time Shane had to get on top of me and start beating my ass," Rodney says. "He was punching me in the side of the face the whole time—I'm talking during the whole thing. And, it's pretty funny when you're in there because I'm going, 'You bastard, what the hell,' and he's cracking me and punching me, and he's not pulling anything. I'm getting cracked in the head because he wants it to look so good. It doesn't bother me for him to do that, because we both want it to look good and he lets us do the same thing to him."

Their willingness to take bumps and accept pain played well with the boys in the back. Wrestlers can be notoriously tough on newcomers, but Pete's and Rodney's respect for the business and their eagerness to learn quickly smoothed the waves. The Posse has developed friendships with many of the Federation's younger Superstars—Val Venis, Prince Albert, Test, Edge and Christian, among others.

"At first they may have thought our characters were a shoot," Pete says. "They may have thought we were really those rich yuppie kids. But once they got to know us and talk to us, they realized that we were just like they are. We have a lot of the same interests and like a lot of the same things, and we're completely not like those characters we do. They know we're going out there and trying our hardest, and doing the best we can. And, they know that most of the time we're getting the &#*% beat out of us—that's our gimmick."

"We had a match with the Acolytes—they're tough dudes for real—and they beat the hell out of us," Rodney recalls. "When I got through the curtain I stood up and walked proud. 'I'm not dead, I'm not hurt.' I had a black eye and that was about it. Every time we don't complain and we do what we're told and we listen to people and not act like we know everything, the guys respect us for that. And we ask questions and ask for advice."

All the on-the-job training the Posse has endured—and still endures—came together at *SummerSlam*. Pete and Rodney played key roles in Shane's "Greenwich Street Fight" against Test, throwing in several cheap shots on Test and brawling with Brisco and Patterson. Although the high spot of the night belonged to Shane—his turnbuckle-to-Spanish announcers' table leap onto Test is among the highlights of 1999—Pete's and Rodney's contributions to the match were hardly ignored.

"We all worked on that match so much that everyone backstage said it showed," Pete says. "It showed that we worked hard on it because everyone was at their spots and everyone did what they were supposed to."

The one-time favor for their old friend Shane has clearly become something more—so much so that Pete and Rodney aren't planning on leaving the ring behind for the "mean streets" of Greenwich any time soon.

"We want to do really well for Shane and for his parents," Rodney says. "I remember how hard it was just to walk out into the arena the first time. Now you don't even think about it. You do mic work and different things like that, and you see how far you've come in a short time.

"Before, it was like, 'How long is this going to last?'" says Rodney, "Now, I hope it lasts forever." ■

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BY KEITH ELLIOT GREENBERG

survival of the fittest

JOANIE LAURER WAS ABOUT TO COMPROMISE EVERYTHING. SINCE EARLY CHILDHOOD, SHE'D DREAMED OF ENTERTAINING THE PUBLIC, PURSUING THAT GOAL BY TAKING VOICE, CELLO AND DANCE LESSONS.

IN HER TEENS, SHE BEGAN BODYBUILDING, bulking up to the point where she drew stares from strangers when she lumbered into a restaurant or department store. Now, the woman who'd later be known as Chyna was throwing it all away. Her older sister, Kathy, had found her a job—a nine-to-five sales job—and Joanie was hopeful that the position would give her the stability she'd never enjoyed in her life.

"My earliest memories of my parents are very unhappy ones," Joanie recalls. "My father drank for many years throughout my childhood. There were stories about him chasing my mother around the house with a butcher knife and stabbing her in the leg, or just picking up and leaving to hook up with other women."

Interestingly, Joanie's parents didn't come from the underbelly of society. Both were educated, and extremely intelligent; her mother was an executive for a large corporation, and her father was a self-made entrepreneur. But Joanie says that their book knowledge and business smarts provided them with surprisingly little guidance on how to raise a family.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **RICH FREEDA**

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(Right) Joanie Lauer with her older sister, Kathy, and her brother, Sonny, enjoying some happy moments together on a lakeside vacation. (Far right) Already a little performer, Joanie poses for the camera beside the family Christmas tree.

"I still cannot get along with my mother, but I believe that's a result of the abuse she took from my father, and that's a shame. She was basically a psycho co-dependent who had revolving-door marriages," says Chyna. "It seemed like I had a new stepfather every year. I always tried to accept them because I wanted another daddy. But you could tell what oozed from them: 'Oh, why do I have to deal with these brats?'"

Today, Chyna attributes what she describes as a compulsive personality to her years as an attention-starved child. "I would do anything to get my mother to pay attention to me," she says. "I would eat all her husband's cookies, just to make him mad, and cause trouble between him and my mother. I would steal my mother's jewelry and wear it around. Now, I know why I did it, but at that time, I didn't understand."

"I might not have been the world's greatest athlete, but I had good genetics. I started developing fast. Pretty soon, I thought, 'Hey, I think I've got something going on here.'"

Chyna recalls that when she was 15, her mother became convinced that her erratic behavior was being triggered by drug abuse, and forced her to go to a rehabilitation center. The counselors quickly realized that Joanie was not a drug user. But they also concluded that she was a very angry teenager who had many of the same psychological problems as the typical addict. "I needed help," Chyna says.

She sought that help in the form of her father, who had stopped drinking and remarried. "We have to make up for lost time," she remembers him telling her. "We'll be a team, and I'll help you get ready for college."

Joanie needed little convincing. She moved in with her father, and his new wife, and soon found herself getting snared into his business schemes. "My father's a bright guy," she says. "And, now that he was sober, he was easy to get along with. The problem was that he was a shyster."

Once, Joanie was sitting with her father in his late-model Jeep. They drove past the library, then up to the river. "Chuck the keys," she remembers him telling her. The car keys went into the water, followed by the house keys. Whatever past he had in Rochester, New York, was being left behind. That night, he, Joanie, and his wife were on a flight to Germany. "I have a really good line on something," she recalls him saying. "We're going to hit it big."

From Germany, the three took a train to Prague, the capital of what was then Czechoslovakia, and then Romania. The communist system was eroding in Eastern Europe, and Joanie's father told everyone he met that he had many valuable lessons for those who'd been locked behind the Iron Curtain. "He'd say, 'Your country has to learn how capitalism works,'" Joanie reminisces. "'If you just give me your money, I'll be glad to show you.'"

At night, Joanie attended numerous social functions with her father's clients. Her understanding of other languages and cultures widened. She felt more cultivated than the girls she knew in Rochester. But, there were other things that made her suspicious. "He'd take me into a bank, and have me sign all these papers," she claims. "I wonder how many bank accounts I have in that part of Europe."

Her father's schemes brought her back and forth between Europe and the United States, where Joanie had developed another interest. It started while watching her mother's exercise videos. "Like I said, I have this compulsive

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personality," Chyna says. "When I started working out, I didn't stop. I might not have been the world's greatest athlete, but I had good genetics. I started developing fast. Pretty soon, I realized the other girls didn't have these little lumps on their arms, or their shoulders sticking out. I thought, 'Hey, I think I've got something going on here.'"

But, few admired her hard-fought achievements. "Everybody hated it," she recounts. "In school, the other kids whispered and laughed about me. My stepmother, who was this stark, German lady who wore bows in her hair and a skirt every day, was horrified because I couldn't fit into any clothes, and she thought that was just disgusting."

Even today, Chyna remembers every cruel word. "People told me, 'You're not a man. Why would you want to look like a man?'...'You must be a lesbian, because only lesbians lift weights.'...'There are no feminine, pretty girls like you.'...'Why would you want to do that to your body?'" Still, Joanie had come too far to give into the resistance. "I realized I had something very special, and kept working at it," she says. "I liked being different, having my own identity. I guess I figured that I was never going to be popular anyway, so I might as well just go for it."

The justifications only worked so far. At the University of Tampa, Joanie looked on in frustration as girls who lived up to more conventional standards of beauty snared the most desirable guys. "I didn't have a whole lot of boyfriends," she says. "But I knew that certain guys liked the way I looked. I had the tightest buns in the whole school, and there were guys who'd want to be with me, but they'd never admit it to their friends. I was always the 'behind closed doors' kind of girlfriend. We could be together, but as soon as we got out in public, I'd be treated like an alien. I thought, 'What's the matter? They liked me enough to see me an hour ago. Now that people are watching, they act like I'm ugly, and they can't stand me.' It really toyed with me mentally. I became very bitter."

Joanie's relationship with her father was also suffering, particularly when she says she discovered that his lust for the dollar extended to opportunities within his own family. She claims that he took out numerous student loans in her name and kept the majority of the money himself. She maintains that the scam left her $40,000 in debt by the time she graduated from college. "This unfortunately continues to affect my life today. Even though I have a good job, and can finally pay off these debts, I can't get a credit card. I can't get a car without a co-signer. There have been many nights that I've cried over this, because I pride myself on being an independent and responsible person. And this has taken my independence away."

After graduating from college with a degree in foreign languages, Joanie found herself adrift in the Florida Keys, surrounded by people with borderline personalities who

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(Right) When Joanie decided to train to be a wrestler, she went to the best—the legendary Killer Kowalski. (Far right) Chyna and Triple H bring a new type of "Attitude" to the Federation.

spent most of their time drinking, wandering around the beach, and falling out with one another.

One crisis after another seemed to ensnare her. She found a boyfriend, but when he hit her, she left. She qualified for a job as a flight attendant, but, en route to her first trip, her car was struck by a drunk driver. Joanie was left with a broken nose and ankle—not to mention the liability from her unpaid college loans.

"I was physically powerful, but emotionally weak," she admits. "If I kept living this way, I probably would have contemplated suicide. I had really endured a lot of pain and rejection. Everyone has a breaking point. I sometimes wonder what it would have been for me."

Joanie had often felt close to the breaking point since her childhood in Rochester.

"I was physically powerful, but emotionally weak. If I kept living this way, I probably would have contemplated suicide. I had really endured a lot of pain and rejection. Everyone has a breaking point."

Then, one day, her sister called out of the blue, hoping to rekindle their relationship. The havoc of their childhood household was something neither sister had caused. Why couldn't they become friends now?

"I would have latched onto anybody at that time," Joanie says. "I was just looking for somebody to love, who would love me back." With barely a second thought, Joanie packed up her car and left the Florida Keys, driving to her sister's home in New Hampshire. There, Joanie was told that Kathy could set her up with a job—at a mobile communications company, selling cellular phones and pagers.

"My sister, who's a lot more conservative than I am, is in her glory because we'll be working in the same company, and she knows I'm going to do so well," Chyna recounts. "We go to the mall, and I'm actually trying to find a business suit that will fit my shoulders and arms. I was just miserable."

She was willing to deal with that misery in order to feel "normal." "It was the most horrible nightmare I could think of, not entertaining people and working nine-to-five. But, I took the job and became pretty good at it. Every morning, I would wake up and go into the 'hood, meeting these guys in McDonald's who were going to spend their Christmas money on buying beepers from me. I became the number one salesperson in the country. My sister was so proud of me. But I hated every freaking second of it."

The course of Joanie's life changed, though, when she and her sister were watching television one day and wrestling appeared on the screen. Suddenly, everything clicked. "I said, 'I could do that. It's entertainment, and I'm a big girl. And you put the two together, and I could do it.' In reality, it could have been anything. The circus could have come to town, and I would have tried out for the circus. I just wanted to get away from selling beepers."

A friend informed Joanie that Walter "Killer" Kowalski, a wrestling icon of the 1950s through the 1970s, lived in her area and trained wrestlers. She called area gyms, but nobody knew him. She looked for ads in the newspaper, but couldn't find any. Somebody told her that Killer Kowalski was dead. Finally, she picked up a Malden, Massachusetts, telephone book and called the only Kowalski listed. The legend answered the phone.

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"I thought about all the people who teased me my whole life, and I put that into my character. They wanted to call me a freak? Now, I was taking it to the bank."

Joanie entered his gym, with an envelope filled with the $2,000 required for her training. Only later would she realize that Kowalski's bookkeeping skills were nowhere close to his wrestling scholarship, and it was difficult for him to remember if students paid him at all. But, she immediately knew that she had found a place where she belonged. Wrestling was the perfect way for her to channel her strength, athleticism and longing to entertain. "I was very adept at learning the moves," she says. "I had a goal when I walked into that school, and that goal was to be a star."

Every student in Kowalski's gym was required to listen to his endless sermons about the virtues of vegetarianism. He would ask students if they ate meat. If the answer was affirmative, he'd launch into a diatribe: "You stupid idiot. You plant a seed in the ground, it grows. You plant a carcass in the ground, it rots. You stupid idiot." Once, a student played a practical joke on the eccentric instructor by insisting that meat was wonderful. Kowalski was so furious that he chased everyone out of the gym, shouting "Don't come back!" as they left.

Yet, as trying as it was listening to Kowalski's monologues, the actual training was far more grueling. Kowalski had a hard boxing ring in his gym, as opposed to a wrestling ring, which has spring in the mat to protect participants when they were slammed. "His ring was worse than a hardwood floor," Joanie recalls, "because a hardwood floor has some groove in it. Walter started out with two-by-fours under his mat. When they broke, he put in steel beams that he wouldn't have to replace again. Eventually, the entire ring was 14 steel beams and a metal rod in the middle."

Kowalski had been a headliner in a different era, when the athletes prided themselves on their knowledge of pure wrestling, and he expected the same of his students. "When Walter wrestled, they didn't put a lot of emphasis on storylines and psychology like we do now, because fans thought everything was real," Joanie says. "Walter taught me how to kill somebody in a fight. I'd clothesline guys until my arm was black and blue, and I thought my shoulder was going to pop out of its socket."

During training, Joanie broke her forearm and tailbone. But, she never contemplated quitting. When her internship was over, she printed up publicity photos and dubbed off tapes of her matches at the training school, then got to work in high school gyms on wrestling's independent circuit as she pursued a career in the World Wrestling Federation.

On the road, Joanie befriended an aging wrestling groupie who'd been a mistress to many a superstar, and now occasionally accompanied a wrestler to the ring at an independent show. "Her dream would have been to be a wrestling manager," Joanie says. "But she was in her 40s,

overweight, and her time was long past. I kind of dug her as an older broad who was funny and cool."

Joanie's friend also knew people who worked for the World Wrestling Federation, and told an official about the raven-haired, brawny specimen trained by Kowalski. Joanie made arrangements to meet the official at a World Wrestling Federation show in Springfield, Massachusetts. The ring-hopeful showed up at the event, picked up a complimentary ticket, and planted herself in a seat, waiting to be summoned to the dressing room for a conference. "I remember sitting there for hours," she says. "I didn't want to get up to go to the bathroom. I didn't want to get up for cotton candy. God forbid someone would come to get me, and I wouldn't be there." But when the night ended, Joanie was still in her seat. Furious, she tracked the official down at his hotel, and demanded a meeting in the downstairs lounge.

The man was flipping through her portfolio, insisting that the World Wrestling Federation wasn't interested in female athletes, when Triple H—then called Hunter Hearst-Helmsley—and Shawn Michaels strolled into the bar. The official introduced the two wrestlers to Joanie, then left, apparently relieved to dump her on somebody else. Interestingly, the pair immediately believed that there was a role for the young woman in the World Wrestling Federation. "She'd make a great heel, Hunter," Michaels raved. "Look at the way she looks. She could be your bodyguard—a female bodyguard. It would be the coolest thing."

"She'd make a great heel, Hunter," Shawn Michaels raved. "Look at the way she looks. She could be your bodyguard...It would be the coolest thing."

As the three chatted, Joanie realized that she had a legitimate shot at making it in the big leagues. "They barely let me say a word," she recalls. "They knew I wasn't there to hit on them, but because I really wanted a job. They could tell I was sincere, and I could tell they were sincere.

"When I left the hotel, I drove past their car in the parking lot. They had the light on, and Shawn was still flipping through my portfolio. I said, 'I got him.'"

Soon, Hunter—the real-life Paul Levesque—and Joanie were working out together, and exchanging ideas about the wrestling business. "We dated," she says, "without really dating at that time." Joanie forgot about mobile communications sales, and began traveling to World Wrestling Federation shows, taking mental notes, while Triple H and Michaels tried to persuade officials to give her a shot.

But two months passed, and Joanie hadn't been given an offer. When rival World Championship Wrestling (WCW)—which had heard about her talents via the wrestling underground—asked her to work for them, she was ready to agree. But, first, she wanted to stop at a World Wrestling Federation show in West Palm Beach, Florida, and discuss the decision with Hunter.

Shane McMahon remembers spotting Joanie outside the building, decked out in mirrored shades and black leather: "I said, 'Wow, look at the size of that girl. She looks cool.'"

When he discovered that this was the woman he'd heard about so often from Michaels and Triple H, he introduced himself. Despite her chiseled look, he found Joanie to be soft-spoken, intelligent and level-headed. "She was such a pleasant person to be around," he says. "And, I admired her excitement about what she could do here."

Joanie was also pleased with the exchange. She recalls Shane telling her that he needed time to talk his father, World Wrestling Federation head Vince McMahon, into the concept being advocated by Hunter and Shawn. But the younger McMahon appeared so interested that she opted not to take the job at WCW.

Once again, weeks passed. When the World Wrestling Federation returned to her area with a show in Lowell, Massachusetts, in February, 1997—four months after the conversation with Shane—Joanie didn't even bother going to the arena. She'd feel more like a groupie than a wrestler, she concluded, and didn't want to hang around backstage. Instead, she went to dinner with a friend, and tried putting the World Wrestling Federation out of her mind. But when she returned home, there was an urgent message on her answering machine. "Joanie, this is Hunter," it began. "You need to come to the building right now. They are going to hire you."

Shawn Michaels was relinquishing the World Wrestling Federation heavyweight championship, claiming that a knee injury made it impossible for him to continue. Since the title was not changing hands in a match, the Federation feared that fans would feel "ripped off." In order to send them home happy, Hunter—the hated Intercontinental champion—was asked to drop his belt to popular Rocky Maivia (later known as The Rock) on the same card. Triple H's career had yet to pick up the momentum he wanted, and the title loss would be a setback. As a consolation, he was allowed to bring in Joanie as his manager.

"She's your deal," he was apparently told. "If she screws up, it's on you."

Joanie packed her bags and left for a World Wrestling Federation tour of Germany. While overseas, she and Hunter became romantically involved. But, her love life was a secondary concern for the rookie. Her primary goal was transforming herself into Chyna.

"I was given a list of names I could use," she says,

"horrible names like Fallon and Venus and Sheera. I thought, 'My God, you might as well call me Henna Helmsley, or something like that.' It was all so hokey. But, the name Chyna worked. You might think of someone feminine, but I could play with that concept—become the 'bull in the china shop.' It was exotic and intoxicating. There was a stripper, I once knew, named Chyna who didn't have the best reputation, but I got over that. It was cool to have just one name—like Cher or Madonna.

"I knew that because of my size and the way I looked, the fans were going to hate me. That was important, since Hunter was a heel. I thought about all the people who teased me my whole life, and I put that into my character. Let them boo me. I'd stand there with this stern look on my face, never smiling, because I didn't give a damn what they thought. They wanted to call me a freak? Now, I was taking it to the bank."

In the dressing room, some of the wrestlers were as mystified by the new arrival as the spectators. "She was very unique," says Bob "Hardcore" Holly, "but no one ever expected her to eventually wrestle against the guys. We just thought she'd be another female manager. Boy, were we wrong."

Chyna did not get involved in physical confrontations right away. "You want to see a character develop," she explains. "At first, I just stood around. It made people curious because I was interesting to look at. All I had to do was take one step [towards the ring action], and people would go, 'Ooooh.' Then, I started getting physically involved. The people screamed, 'Oh my God, look what she did! She hit somebody!' Then, I started beating up on the guys without them hitting me back."

Over time, Chyna got into wild brawls with such wrestlers as Jeff Jarrett, Road Dogg and Chris Jericho. But because of her slow transformation, fans had now been educated to accept the male-against-female confrontations as legitimate battles. "Where else do you see a 15-minute knock-down, drag-out fight between a man and woman, with the woman punching the man in the balls, the guy hitting the woman closed fisted, and the two flipping each other around?" she argues. "Whether it's fake or not fake, people don't look at this as male vs. female, but Chyna the athlete vs. Chris Jericho the athlete. And people are enthralled as they watch."

And while evening-gown matches and other encounters centered around the World Wrestling Federation's Women's Championship are perceived as excuses for the participants to expose one another's flesh, Chyna's battles stand apart. She is regarded as a warrior as rugged as any male. Because of this, her October 17, 1999, Intercontinental title victory over Jarrett was viewed not as a fluke, but an achievement by a wrestler who earned her way to the top.

"She's our most unique Superstar in a certain way," says Shane. "She's a girl who can do anything a guy can do. And we haven't even seen all she can do yet. She hasn't unleashed it."

Finally, the star status Chyna idealized in Kowalski's gym has been attained. But life in the spotlight isn't always glamorous. She's on the road about 50 percent of the year, and when she is home, she's emphatic about keeping her address a secret. Even so, her house has been pelted with eggs, and her car vandalized. She and Hunter have also received numerous death threats.

In addition to taking security precautions, Chyna has made other alterations to her life—including changing her physical appearance. Unlike others who've undergone cosmetic surgery, she openly discusses her breast enhancement. "Big deal," she offers. "I'm in show business. As a matter of fact, [after the operation] I went on TV to introduce my two newest acts. It was a lot of fun. I'm proud of these boobs."

Her decision to change her prominent jaw created more of a dilemma: "Here I am, telling women that you can be strong and powerful without being a beauty queen, and then I changed my face. I felt like I was being hypocritical. But my jaw had created a lot of insecurity, made me look quite masculine, and even caused speech problems. I hated it every time I looked in the mirror. Then, my teeth started to break from the extreme underbite, and a couple of dentists told me, 'Have this procedure, or lose a mouth full of teeth.'"

Chyna can now discuss the procedure openly, just as she has no qualms in talking about her bond with Hunter, along with their differences. "He wants kids," she admits. "I don't. He comes from this family that's been together his entire life. He talks to his mother every other day on the phone. And here I am, from this completely dysfunctional family. When people ask me if I want to bring more kids into the world—after what I've been through—it makes me want to throw up."

But with wrestling taking precedence over family life, Triple H and Chyna have been able to maintain their romance. "I sometimes wonder, as much as we love each other, if we could get along if we were taken out of this environment," she concedes. "I would like to say yes, but when I think about it, 99 percent of our conversations are about wrestling. We'll be laying in bed, and he'll roll over and say, 'I just had an idea for a new angle.' And I'll say, 'That makes me horny. Let's make love.' That's our relationship, and it's scary to think what will happen—and where we'll go—when it's all gone." ■

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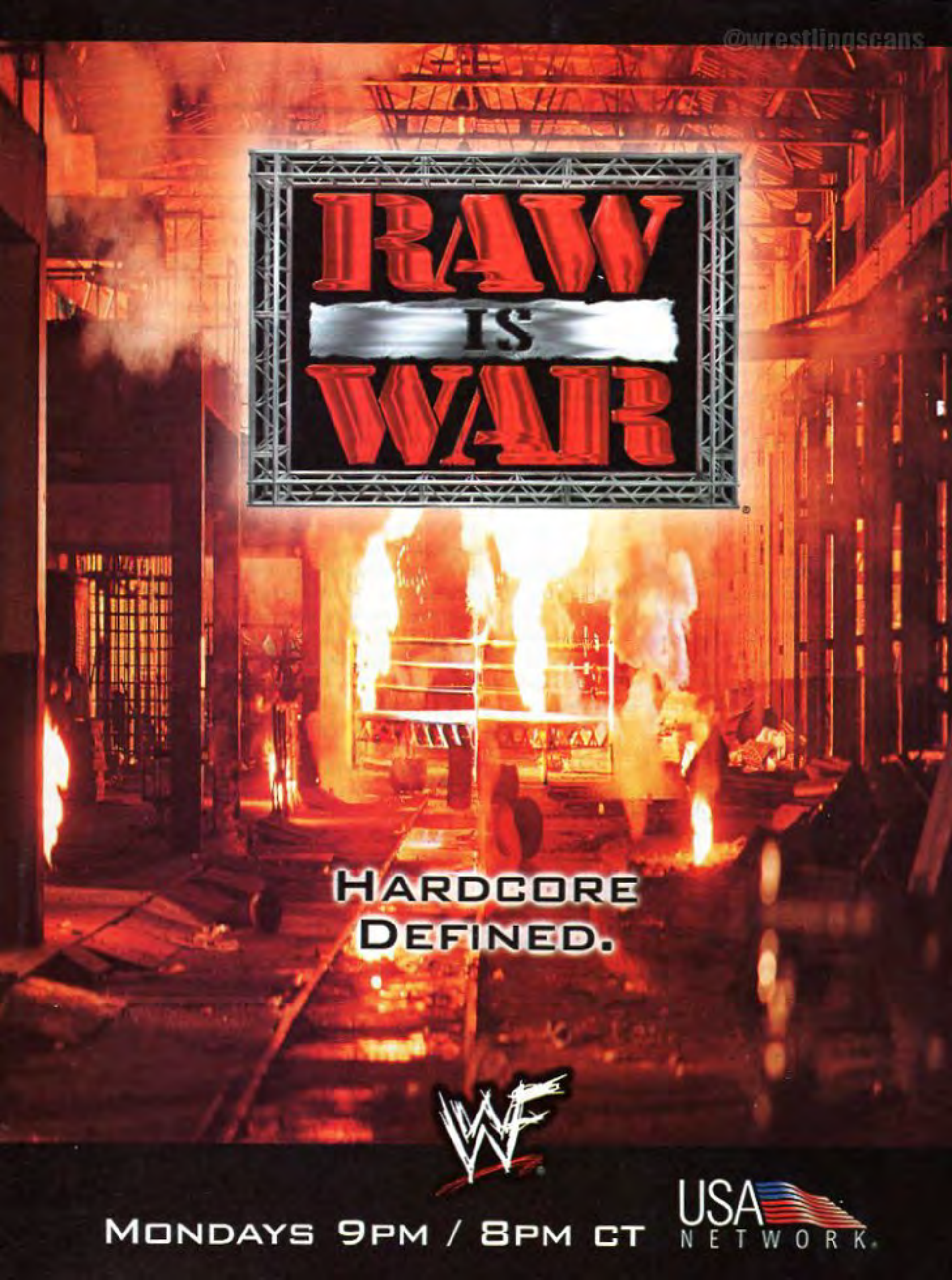

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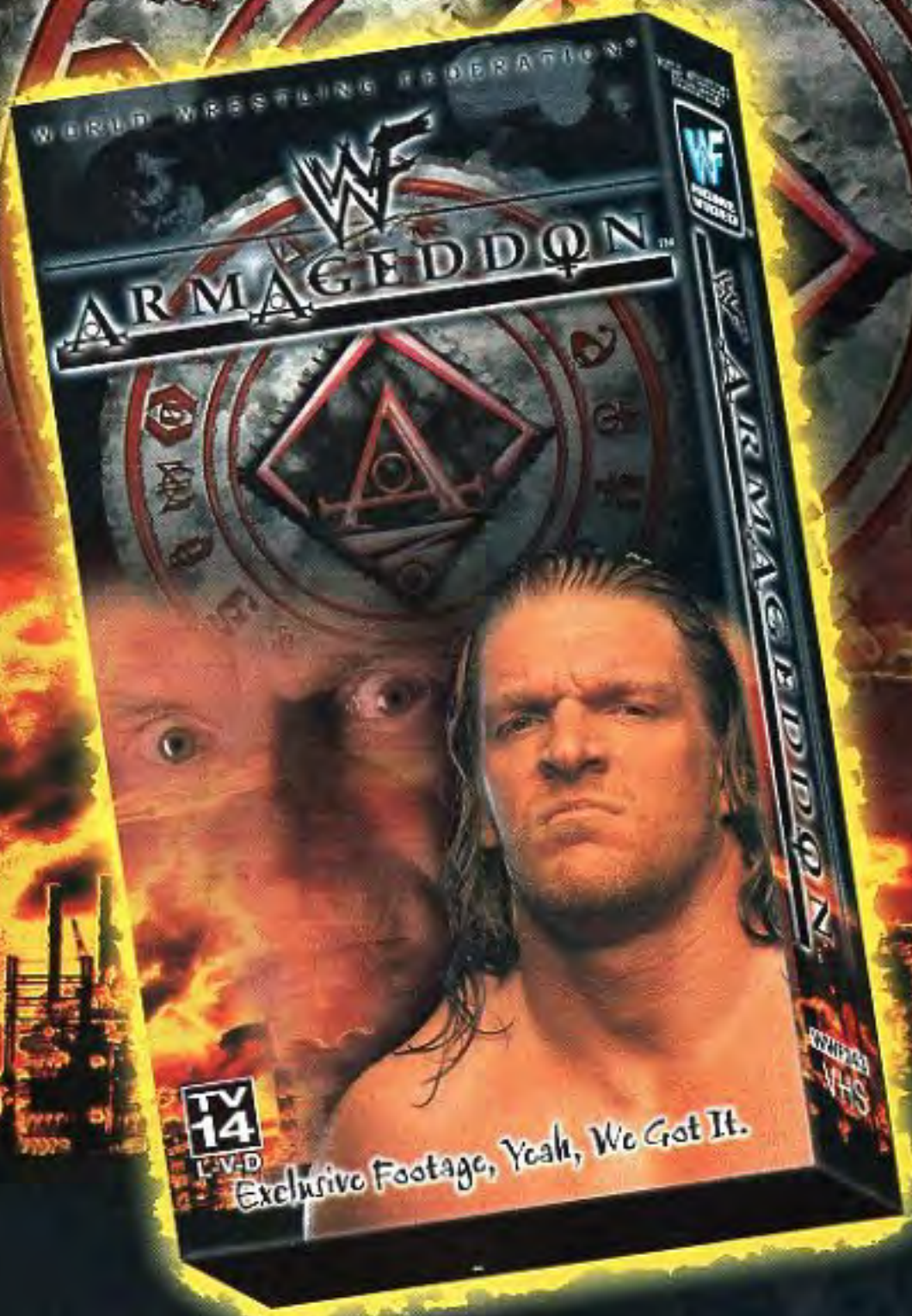

"The End" for Stephanie and Triple H? Armageddon could be only the beginning!

Rent this **February 8, 2000** and see for yourself!

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By Lou Gianfriddo

SHOWTIME

Life Is Indeed Large at the Big Show's Florida Mansion

Paul Wight is truly one of a kind in sports-entertainment, so it should come as no surprise that the Big Show's house is as unique as he is.

The palatial Florida home is actually two Spanish Villa-style houses combined into one. The first house was built in 1920, while the second was constructed in 1940—two distinct periods in American architecture. In 1995, the two buildings were joined by the construction of a large ballroom.

Along with Wight and his fiancée, Bess, the villa is also home to his dog, Lefty.

The grounds on the estate are indeed comfortable and lush, and the perfect place for Wight to kick back and relax, or to flex his muscles on things other than wrestling, like billiards and swimming.

(Left) Wight pets his dog, Lefty, as they sit on the front steps of his palatial Florida home. (Above, from left) Wight checks under the hood of his 1971 Dodge Charger Super Bee; subjects himself to the massive sound system in his custom-made SUV; and shows off the air-brush design on the tank of his 1988 Harley-Davidson SS Soft Tail.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICH FREEDA

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When he's not knocking skulls in Federation rings, Wight can chill by the pool.

Wight calls the shots as he and his fiancée, Bess, shoot pool.

Big Show displays some serious muscle on top of and under the hood.

The Show astride his Harley-Davidson 1988 SS Soft Tail.

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Cuban cigar boxes and wrappers adorn Wight's wall.

The Big Show is also something of a muscle-car enthusiast. He enjoys riding around the Sunshine State in his 1971 Dodge Charger Super Bee. This classic, *RAW Magazine* learned, was a one-year-only production model. Wight's rare gem is one of only 64 still in operation, and it is a valued prize for any car collector. And Wight has definitely upgraded the car to fit the Big Show.

Wight also likes power in other forms. He favors Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Big Show's model is a custom job—a 1988 SS Soft Tail. The fine airbrush work features an image of the big man himself on the tank.

Besides being a car collector, Wight is also a cigar aficionado and has displays of cigar bands and boxes on his walls.

Whether driving, relaxing or playing, Paul Wight has built a retreat perfectly suited to his larger-than-life persona. ■

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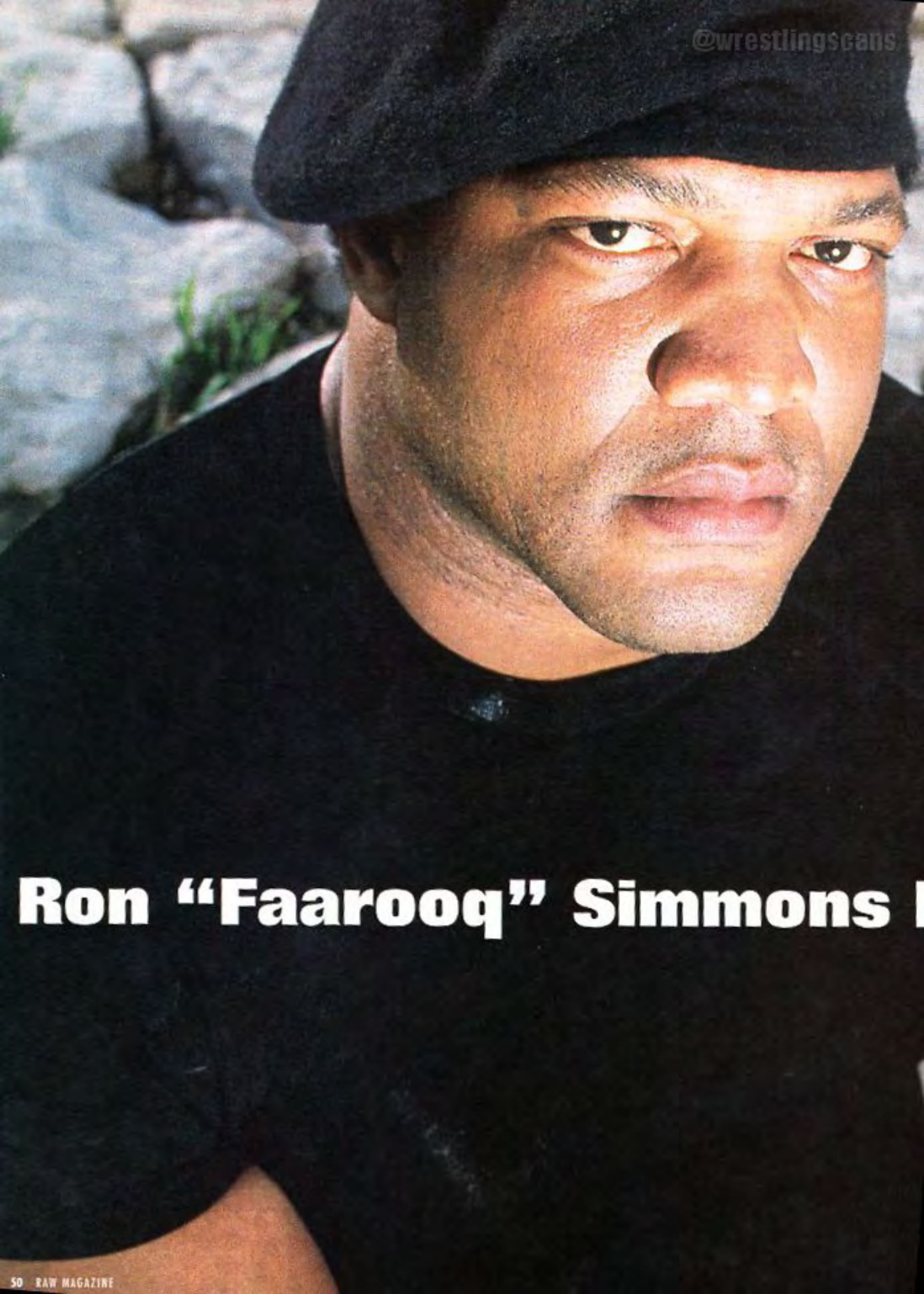

Ron "Faarooq" Simmons

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by **robert j. bledsoe**

from heel to hero

Mentors the New Generation

RON SIMMONS, BETTER KNOWN to Federation fans as Faarooq, has brawled his way back into the spotlight as one half of the poker-playing, hard-living Acolytes. But it was only after a lengthy silence that fans have once again started hearing Simmons' trademark tough-talking, no-nonsense voice on television.

Yet, Ron Simmons isn't bitter. In fact, he relishes his new role—a role that's even larger behind the scenes when the cameras aren't rolling. Fancy catch phrases, hordes of mic time and big individual pushes aren't of much interest to him. For Simmons, the name of the game is giving back what was given to him.

"When I leave this profession, I want to be able to say that I took the time to help other guys like I was helped," Simmons says. "What else can I accomplish? Everybody wants to be a champion, of course. But, I've been one. Now, it's not about having a belt. The satisfaction comes with seeing the success of this profession and with having it respected."

Many wrestling fans, and observers alike, contend that the former leader of the Nation of Domination is being underutilized in the Federation, that his "putting over" former members of the Nation has come at a cost to his own career. Many see Simmons, a former WCW champion (Aug.–Dec. 1992) and the first African-American in any major professional wrestling organization to stake such a claim, as languishing in the midcard ranks, way below his potential.

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While the careers of The Rock, D'Lo Brown, The Godfather and Mark Henry have blossomed, some see Simmons as being left behind. Simmons, however, strongly disagrees.

"From an outside standpoint, it may look like that," says Simmons. "But my role has actually increased more than it ever was while I was a champion. It's probably more demanding now than ever before.

"We've got a lot of young guys here. There's a lot of things that I can teach them. Lots of the guys look up to me for advice and watch me to learn things. The people who say I'm being underutilized," contends Simmons, "are being only one-dimensional. I enjoy the role I'm in now. People helped me along the way; now, it's my turn to give back."

The fact remains that Ron Simmons' role in the Federation has been much talked about ever since his debut. He was once billed as Faarooq Asaad, a gimmick that came complete with a purple helmet reminiscent of a Greek gladiator.

Most Federation fans, however, remember Simmons in his role as the leader of the Nation of Domination, a group of militant wrestlers who accused World Wrestling Federation Chairman Vince McMahon of systematically suppressing the careers of minority Superstars. Simmons says that he was consulted about playing the controversial role, but that he went along only after it was clear that the line of respect would not be crossed.

"When the idea was thrown out, [the writers] wanted to know how far to go with the character without overstepping the line. [The writers] didn't want to harm the Nation of Islam, Muslims, or the Islamic faith in general," says Simmons. "So, I, too, needed to know what was going too far and what not to do. I have a lot of respect for the Islamic religion. Some of our best leaders, and some who African-Americans and others in this country have looked up to, have been Muslim.

"I didn't, in any way, want to do harm. What I tried to do was let folks know that the Nation wasn't just about a militant thing," says Simmons. "The message was that we wanted the same opportunities and chances as everyone else. That was the basic thing, and it was how I wanted to portray the character. It wasn't just about black guys wanting to go out and beat up whites. I think I did a good job of it because I would get feedback from [Black Muslims] thanking me and letting me know that I represented them well."

Though most were satisfied with how Simmons came off as the leader of the Nation of Domination, others wondered if playing the race card was appropriate at all, if there was a place in the World Wrestling Federation for such portrayals. Clearly, some Federation fans didn't take too kindly to the sight of a black man berating whites week in and week out. The amount of "heel heat" he and the Nation received came as no surprise to Simmons.

"Hell, I can walk down the street right now without opening my mouth and get heat. And I don't think I need to tell you why," laughs Simmons. "So, just imagine the response I'd get speaking from a Black Muslim point of view. Imagine me speaking from a black militant point of view in front of a conference in Birmingham during the Civil Rights Movement. What kind of reaction do you expect I'd get?"

Faarooq has Road Dogg on the run (far left). At the *SmackDown!* Food Fight on Thanksgiving, Simmons talks turkey (middle left). Showing the Mean Street Posse who really owns the streets (above). Heel Faarooq "puts over" Jeff Hardy (left).

Though the questionable Nation of Domination storylines generated much heat, Simmons maintains that he was comfortable playing the role. He even jokes that his family would like to see a reunion, now that many former Nation members have become household names in the Federation.

As for the "Faarooq" name itself, Simmons is not necessarily interested in dropping it. With either name, Simmons says, he brings the same intensity to the ring, and there's a part of him in each name.

"It's okay with me. From my understanding, Faarooq was a leader during his time. And people have come to recognize me the same way," says Simmons. People still refer to me as either Ron Simmons or Faarooq. So, sometimes when fans ask for an autograph, I'll just sign Faarooq Simmons."

Faarooq's current push is seen as a comeback only by those who just see Ron Simmons on camera. He's always been a headliner to those wrestlers he's helped backstage. Every successful entity has key players behind the scenes, and that also holds true for Simmons and his role in the World Wrestling Federation.

"When I leave this business, I want to leave with a lot of respect," says Simmons. "I'd like for the guys I've worked with and the employers for whom I've worked to say that I gave everything I had and did my job well. The only thing that I can ask is that my legacy be one of giving back what was given to me." ■

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by
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Working Like a Dog

Diet and Exercise Keeps Davey Boy Fit as a Fiddle

A day on the road for a Federation performer is anything but typical. Because of their travel obligations, the performers' days are tightly regimented—an extra half-hour here or there could result in a tardy arrival at the next town, which always means a fine and a write-up in the agents' report.

So, the performers get by through constant adjustment. They plan accordingly. Most schedule their workouts and meals to meet their individual needs and plan their days according to how far they have to fly or drive.

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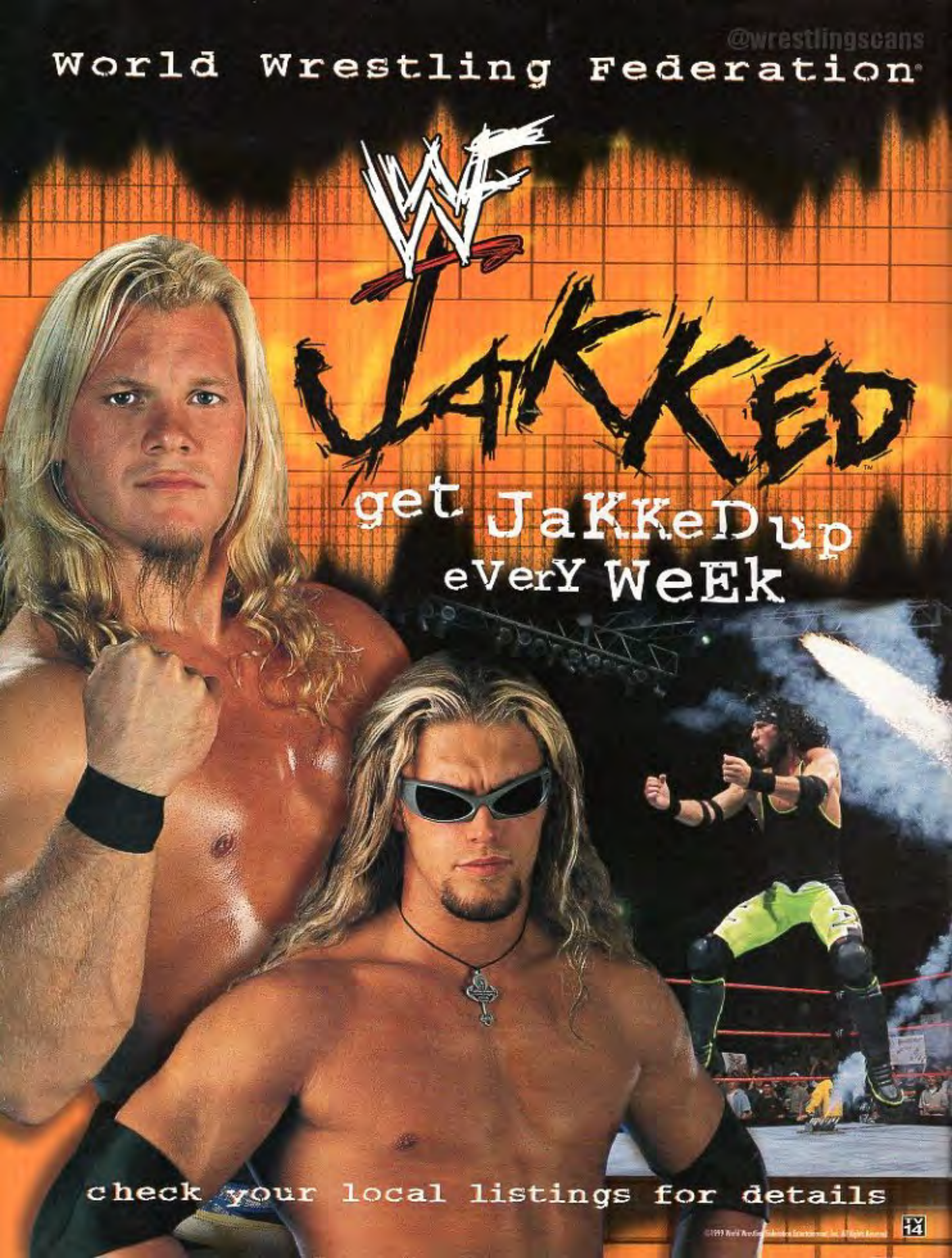

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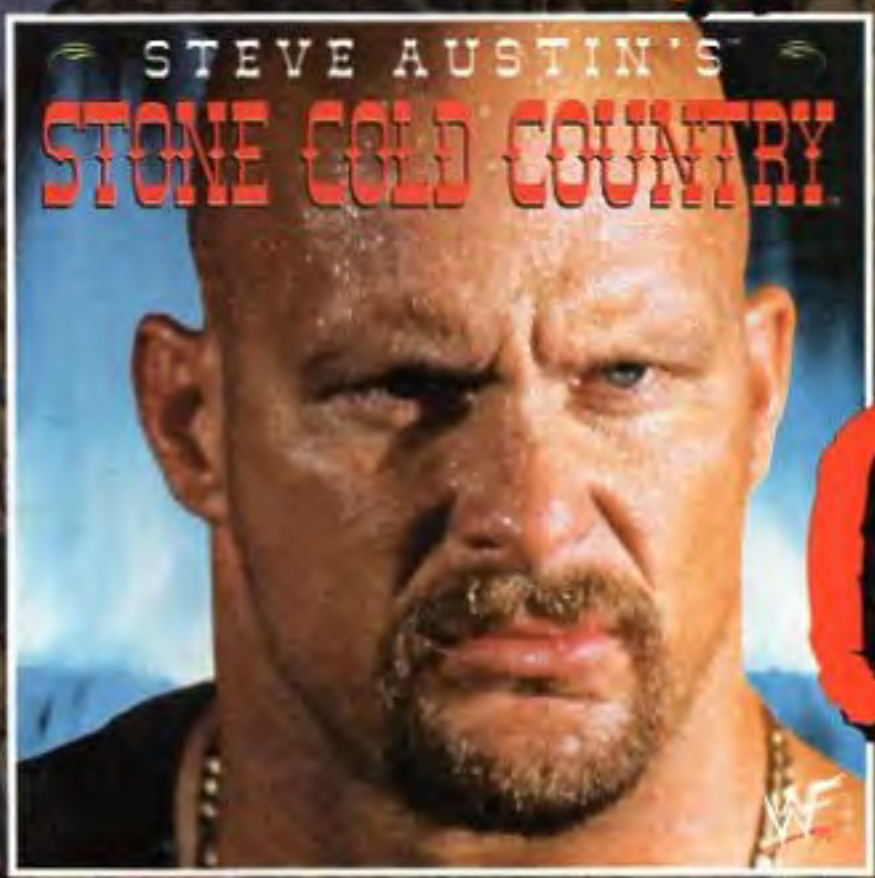

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The Bulldog laid out his schedule: he flies into town, rents a car, trains at a gym, eats, checks into a hotel, and does his best to get to the event destination on time. However, he does modify his training to meet his needs.

"On the road," he says, "I train with the boys. I'll always train with someone different, but I enjoy training with [Steve] Blackman and Bob Holly.

"One day, I'll work out to one of Blackman's routines," Davey Boy adds. "The training sessions are very quick. We use lighter weights and work the muscle; it makes for a great pump. The next day we'll do my routine, and the day after, Holly's."

Davey Boy has returned to intense training after a year off. During his tenure in World Championship Wrestling (WCW), he broke his spine when officials neglected to tell him the location of a trap door inside the ring. The injury nearly ended his career; his addiction to the pain medications Demerol and Percocet nearly ended his life.

"I broke my spine in WCW," he says. "My T-eight-and-nine discs were shattered. Then, I caught a staph infection in my spine. My doctors thought I'd never walk again."

His doctors were very concerned about the staph infection within his spinal fluids. According to Davey Boy, he was flirting with death.

"My doctor told me, 'If you don't die first, you'll never walk,'" the Bulldog recalls. "I went in for an operation. They [the surgeons] removed a vein from my leg and placed it in my arm; the vein travelled from my arm into my heart."

The Bulldog showed more strength than the doctors credited him with having. Although it took nearly a year, Davey Boy said he showed improvement with each passing day, gaining a bit of strength here, more sensation in his back and legs there. After a while, he says, the infection disappeared, but he was warned by a doctor "not to train."

"I said, 'yeah, yeah,' but I trained anyway. These doctors don't know $%@* about muscle memory and stuff," he says.

Even though "my spine looked like an eggshell," Davey Boy battled onward. His weight had dropped to 225 pounds. During his first run in the Federation, which began in late 1984, the Bulldog was just less than 230 pounds. Once he "got in the groove" with his training and eating plans, his weight, over the course of time, recovered. He weighed about 270 pounds when he received his Federation contract last year—12 pounds lighter than his all-time high of 282.

When Davey Boy returns home after a series of house shows or television tapings, he says he modifies his training. He says he will only train at home if he missed any days while on tour.

"I don't want to ache when I'm home, so I rarely train," he adds. "I put my body on the line every night when I'm on the road. When I come

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Davey Boy shares a few exercise tips with some young athletes (left). According to the Bulldog, chicken is one of the best sources of protein, and rice helps add needed carbs (right). Taking a break from his workout, the Bulldog chats with a friend (below).

home, I want to recover. That's not only good for my body, but it helps in [muscle] growth."

Davey Boy has a point. A properly trained body grows muscle tissue at rest, not while training, and certainly not when an athlete is working his ass off in the ring.

Diet is another crucial key to muscular success and to overall health in general. Davey Boy was eating chicken breasts and rice before most athletes knew of their benefits to athletic performance.

"When I'm on the road, I try to eat at good places," he says. "I'd rather starve instead of putting junk food down my throat. I like to eat things that help keep me ripped.

"Few people outside the business know," he goes on, "that when you have less body fat, you look bigger on television. I think that's what the business is about in some way: it's an illusion."

To help him attain that "ripped" look, Davey Boy selects foods that are high in protein and carbohydrates, yet low in overall fat—fat being the densest nutrient; one gram of it contains nine calories. He says he mainly eats egg whites, some meat and chicken breasts for protein, and either some pasta or rice for his carbs. During extended road trips, the Bulldog says he tries to eat at least seven meals a day.

"Wrestling every night burns a tremendous amount of calories," he says. "So I need that many meals or else my weight and my performance will drop."

Davey Boy isn't all business when it comes to "packing away the groceries," however. When he comes home, he often splurges.

"I don't drink beer anymore," he says, "but I will go out with my wife and son for pizza. I like pizza, but not as much as [former Federation performer] the Warlord. That big bastard used to eat two or three large pizzas a night!"

The Bulldog also admits he has a weakness for mozzarella sticks. "You believe that?" he asks in disbelief. "Mozzarella sticks? I can't seem to get enough of those."

Davey Boy says he has completed a workout video tentatively titled *British Bulldog's Basic Bodybuilding Workout*. He tells *RAW Magazine* that he's "waiting for Vince McMahon to look at it." The video was finished before all of the Bulldog's physical problems sacked him.

Barring major injury, the Bulldog is hoping for a career extension. "I'm just taking care of myself; I can't take chances like I used to. But I don't regret taking them when I was younger. I don't think many guys could take the punishment that I took ten or so years back." ■

Editors Note: **A new series begins this month in *RAW Magazine*. The series profiles the strategies that World Wrestling Federation performers use to maintain their fitness and health on the road. In-depth accounts by the athletes will detail why they train and diet as they do, and how they work out not only for "that ideal look," but also to guarantee their future long-term health.**

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To Bare or Not To Bare

by Laura

The opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of RAW Magazine or the World Wrestling Federation.

AT THE *ARMAGEDDON* PAY-PER-VIEW event in December, Miss Kitty shocked the world when she bared her breasts in front of a live audience. For the first time in World Wrestling Federation history, a woman had purposely exposed her breasts.

Needless to say, some observers were thrilled at the sight, but many others were offended by Miss Kitty's "disclosure," especially as children were in attendance.

This incident—and the disapproval by some regarding the scantily clad Federation females—bespeaks of a far greater issue in our culture. As a society, we attach a strict moralistic value to sexuality and the exposing of human flesh. And yes, as a society, we have a major hang-up concerning breasts.

From public breast-feeding to X-rated flicks, breasts sure do have a bad reputation. Ironically, breasts are not the only part of the body that are sexual—lips, shoulders, hair, the neck and others are, also. So, then, what are we to do? Don potato sacks?

We are obsessed with keeping one of the most natural aspects of life—sex—locked away, particularly from children. It is this inhibited, fearful approach to sex and

There are many who believe—and loudly preach these moralistic opinions—that sex, nudity, pornography and the sex industry as a whole suppress women. In my opinion, it is censorship that suppresses women.

the human body that distorts it. Sex is one of the most natural functions of the human and animal worlds. It really is a paradox—the very part of a woman's body that nourishes and gives life is shunned and made to seem dirty.

Perhaps part of the problem is that breasts are seen as men's property—their primary purpose being to give men pleasure. And yes, showing a little cleavage or outright flashing does give men a quick thrill.

But when a woman makes a conscious decision to bare her body—to share her beauty—it is her choice, and to a certain extent, it can be empowering. Empowerment is the ability to act and the right to do so. Many—including some feminists—are still hung up on female nudity.

There are many who believe—and loudly preach these moralistic opinions—that sex, nudity, pornography and the sex industry as a whole suppress women. In my opinion, it is censorship that suppresses women. We have fought long and hard for equality with men—especially in the workplace. Many women are now corporate executives or have made important contributions to the fields of mathematics and science, while those who choose to pose nude or sell sex are ostracized. Where's the equality in that? Where is choice in that? Censorship is the enemy of "feminist" goals, of which the basic tenets are freedom and tolerance. Are only certain women and certain choices appropriate? To denigrate these women and their actions as being morally corrupt is a major contradiction.

In targeting the sports-entertainment industry, many critics have used the way in which women are portrayed as ammunition. Women are clad in next to nothing, often play passive roles as managers or valets, and often use their sexuality to get a "pop" from the audience or distract an opponent. In all honesty, what is the harm? I do not believe that the media is ultimately responsible for how we perceive ourselves. In fact, one could argue that it is merely a reflection.

One way of looking at the issue is that it's a testimony of the underlying truth of how women are truly perceived in our paternalistic culture. In fact, that is what sports-entertainment is largely about—a satire of life. It exaggerates the social roles and situations that are prevalent in our culture.

The objectification of women in the World Wrestling Federation is nothing new to us. In fact, one could say that the Federation is just being brutally honest—it isn't going to sugarcoat anything or pretend that we, as a society, are further along than we really are. The bottom line, however, is that this is all done in fun—so please, relax and have a sense of humor, for God's sake!

Take Debra, for example. Her popularity can be greatly attributed to her "puppies." Across the nation, men would go wild, begging for a glimpse of her breasts. And, Debra has used her breasts to tease men in the audience, keeping them on the edge of their seats as they hope to catch a peek. She had fun with the crowds and they, in turn, were entertained.

Some feel these women are being objectified, and I, myself, have found many women's matches gratuitous. But to attach a moral label to these women's choices is a double-standard, especially when my own eyes are peeled when Edge is in the ring in those oh-so-tight spandex pants.

On the flip side, let's take a look at Chyna. True, she comes into the arena dressed in very little, but she is an amazingly strong role model for women. She is confident in herself—how she looks, her abilities as a performer, and as a sexy woman. And, she doesn't back down from anyone. Chyna is also the first woman in sports-entertainment who has mixed it up in the ring with the boys—and only boys—as she refuses to wrestle women.

Chyna's character is actually a great illustration of both the progress women have made and the potential they can yet fulfill. She first came to the Federation as Triple H's valet, and while she was physically involved in many of DX's antics, she was always the silent observer. However, she finally expressed her voice, and when DX fell apart we learned that she had been the glue holding them together for so long. Over time, Chyna evolved into a confident and aggressive woman, winning the respect of male and female Federation fans as a bona fide wrestler. The promise Chyna holds for women is that while she is at the top of the roster in the Federation—a strong and powerful woman—she is also very comfortable with her body and isn't afraid to exude her sexuality.

To bare or not to bare—is that really the question? I think the answer is pretty obvious. While a woman ultimately has the choice to expose her flesh, she also has huge consequences to consider. To bare some skin will get her an abundance of disdain and moralistic rubbish shoved down her throat. Miss Kitty paid that price, but has refused to allow it to limit her.

My opinion? I think you all can guess...*If you got it, flaunt it!* ■

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